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Chess for beginners

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW TO GET STARTED WITH THE GAME OF CHESS

INSIDE
MASTER THE QUEEN'S GAMBIT

Discover the best moves

Fun for the whole family

Study the pieces

Look out for traps

GRANDMASTERS
Meet the sport's greatest players

GAME GUIDE
Uncover the history and heritage of chess

Digital Edition

FUTURE
SEVENTH EDITION

Welcome to *Chess* for beginners

The game of chess has been around for over 1,500 years, originating in India and eventually making its way across the world. Over time, the rules may have changed, but the objective remains the same: capture the king. In this book, we take you through the most basic rules all the way through to some of the more complicated strategies that will have you winning an impressive game of chess in no time. Learn the movement of each piece and how it can be utilised in pins and skewers, traps and decoys. There is more to chess than you could possibly imagine. Once you've learnt the basics, we take you through ways to further your game, by joining clubs or tournaments. Finally, in the reference section, all of your chess questions are answered and a glossary of terms will stop you from ever getting confused by the terminology ever again. Get ready for checkmate!

FUTURE

Chess for beginners

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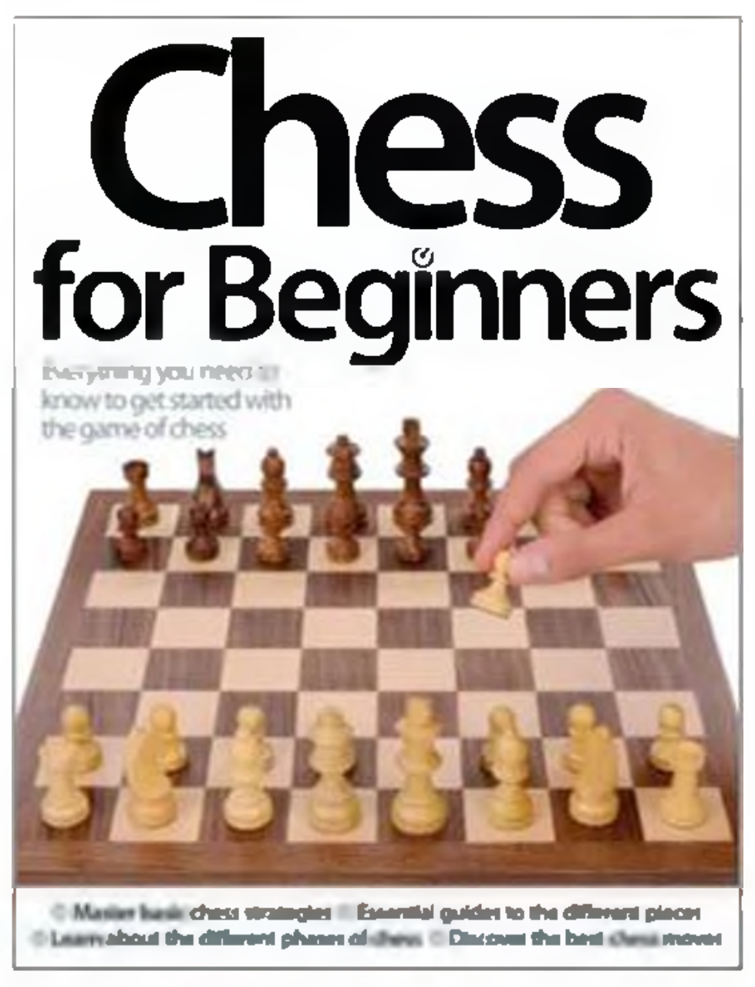

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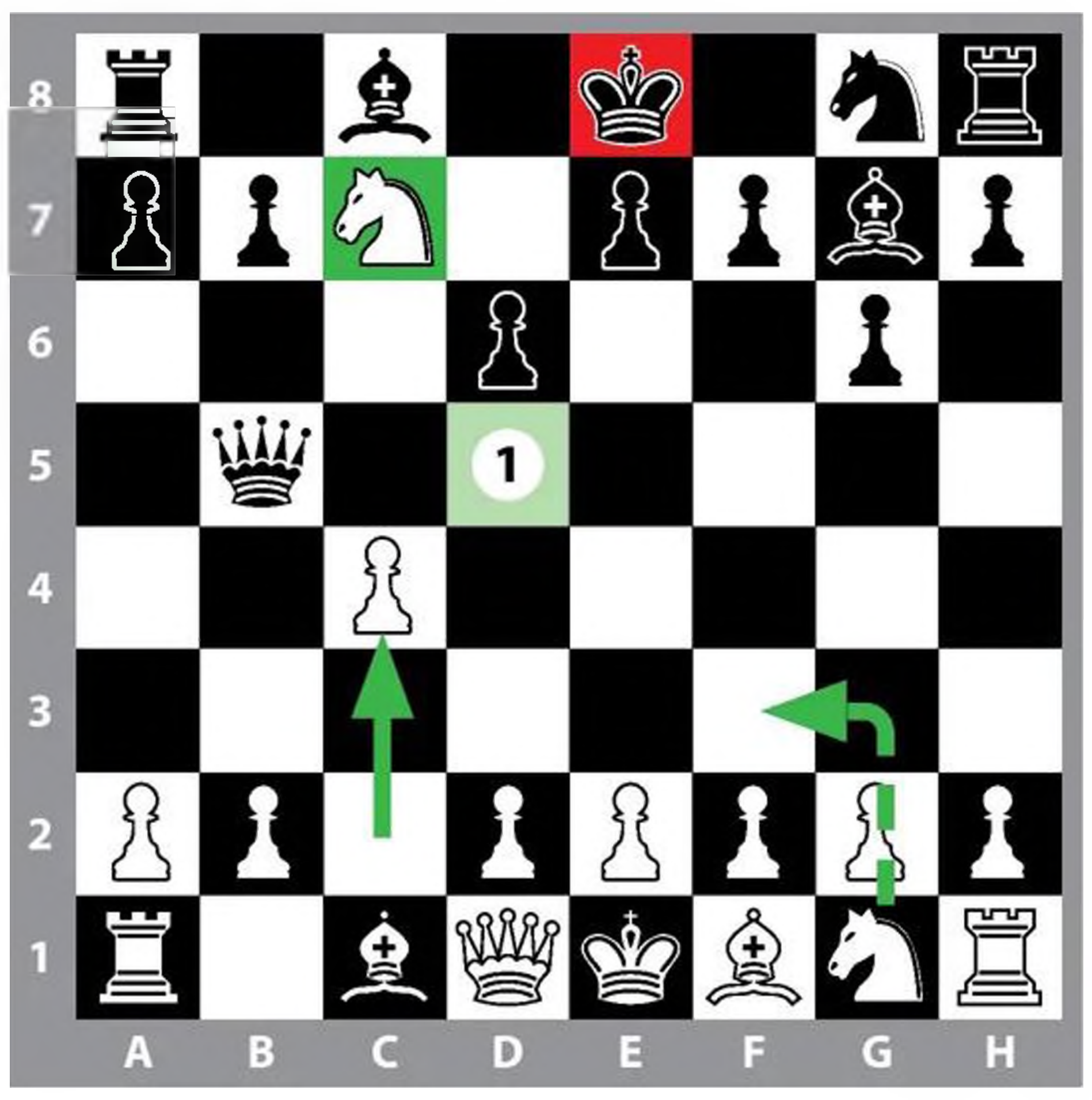


Key:

🟥 The king is in danger/check

🟩 Original location of piece

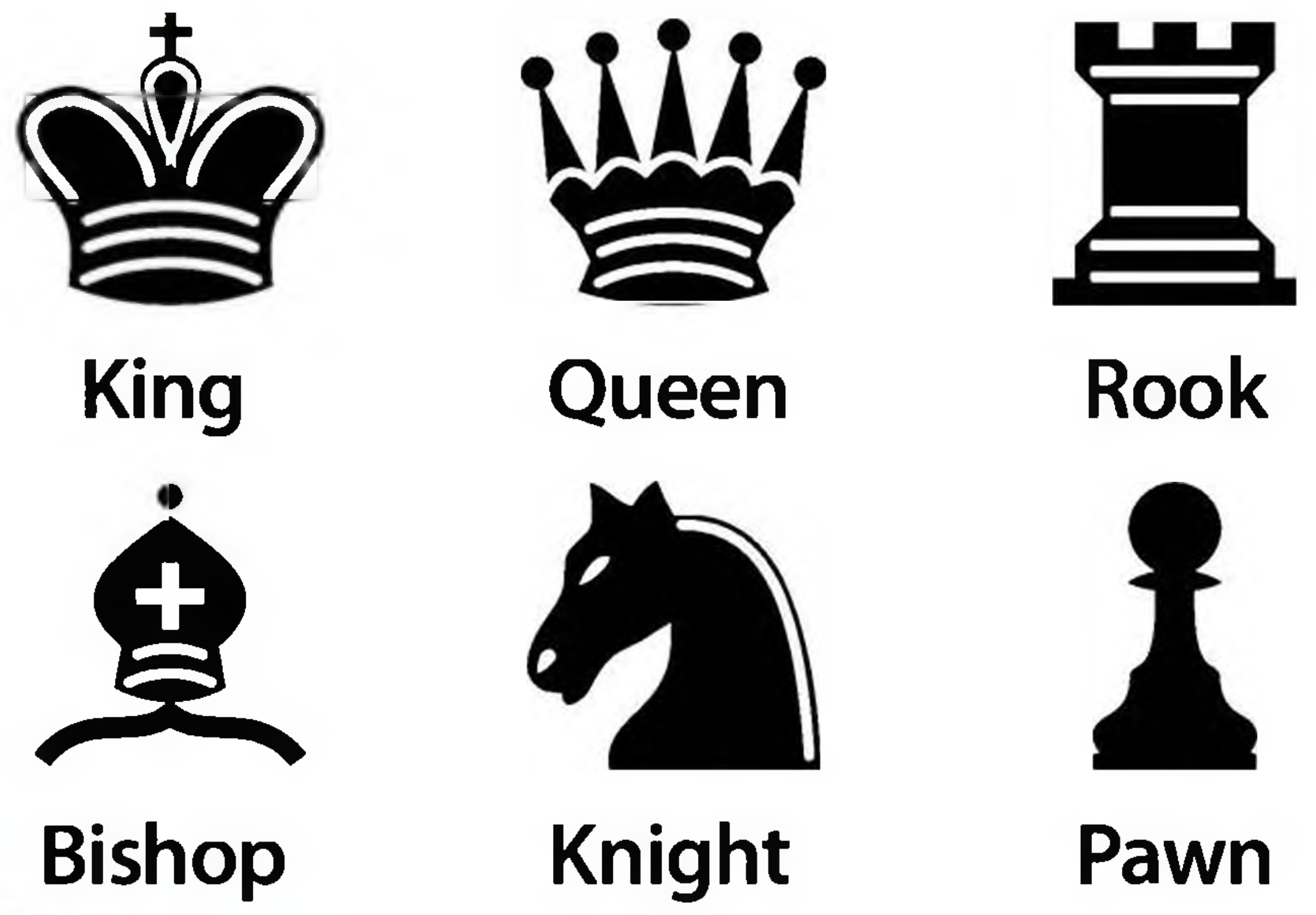
🟩 Final destination of piece

① ② Reference to text

→ Direction of movement

- - → Movement of a knight hops a piece

The pieces:



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The complete guide to chess

Everything you need to know to start playing one of the world's most ancient strategy board games

It's a game that has been around for hundreds of years. There are 3D versions of it, giant versions of it and even a musical has been written about it. Chess is one of the best known board games in the world, popular for its strategy, variance and the fact that it can be picked up and played by people of all ages. Chess is a test of concentration, creativity, endurance and tactics and this bookazine will teach you all you need to know in order to play this historic game.

You'll find out all about the history and origins of chess, how it was a crucial battleground in the midst of the Cold War, the tools and accessories you need to be able to fully enjoy the game and, most importantly, the tricks, move sets, opening and closing moves that will set you apart from all the other wannabe Grandmasters.

Chess is a pastime that transcends class, race, age and gender boundaries and this bookazine will allow you to become a part of that rich culture.

Aim of the game

You've probably heard someone say 'checkmate' when they've won an argument. This is how to say it for real

The aim of chess is to capture your opponent's king. At the beginning of the game, each of you has 16 pieces on the board: eight pawns, two rooks, two bishops, two knights, a queen and a king. All the pieces move in different ways, leading to a near endless variety of gameplay positions. Every time one of your pieces wants to land on a square that is already occupied by one of your opponent's pieces, you move your piece to that square and remove your opponent's, which is then out of the game. This is called 'taking' the piece.

Each of you is trying to manoeuvre your pieces in such a way as to get the opponent's king stuck in a trap so that no matter what move they make, the king will get taken next turn. Once you've reached that stage and there is no way for your opponent to not have their king taken, the game is over and you get to say 'Checkmate' and emerge victorious.

The trickiest element of chess is to ensure you aren't being led into a trap yourself. It's very easy to get so wrapped up in setting up your own king-capturing situation that you miss the trap being set by your opponent. Good players are able to read what you are planning and can manoeuvre their pieces in such a way that they wait until you make your move, take a key piece of yours and scupper your plan.

Planning is very important in chess. Top players are able to think several moves in advance, placing pieces in seemingly pointless positions in order to set up an attack when the final piece of the move set gets put into place. It's a bit like a jigsaw puzzle. The entire thing can look very strange and disjointed until a crucial piece gets added and all of a sudden the picture becomes clear. It is also very common for players to sacrifice pieces in order to strengthen their position. It is well worth putting a pawn, which is the most limited piece, in a position to be taken in order to set up the capture of an opponent's rook, knight, bishop, queen or king, all of which are much more valuable to the player.

All in all, chess is a reasonably easy game to learn in terms of how pieces move, but learning how to play it well is much more time-consuming. Ultimately, you are trying to catch the king, but getting there requires skill, ingenuity and an ability to outthink your opponent.

FACT

Who's first?

In chess the person playing as the white pieces always goes first. It is generally thought that this gives that player an advantage, so the players alternate which colour they are playing as during a match.

History of chess

Where chess originated and why it has been important – from entertaining royalty to establishing dominance in war

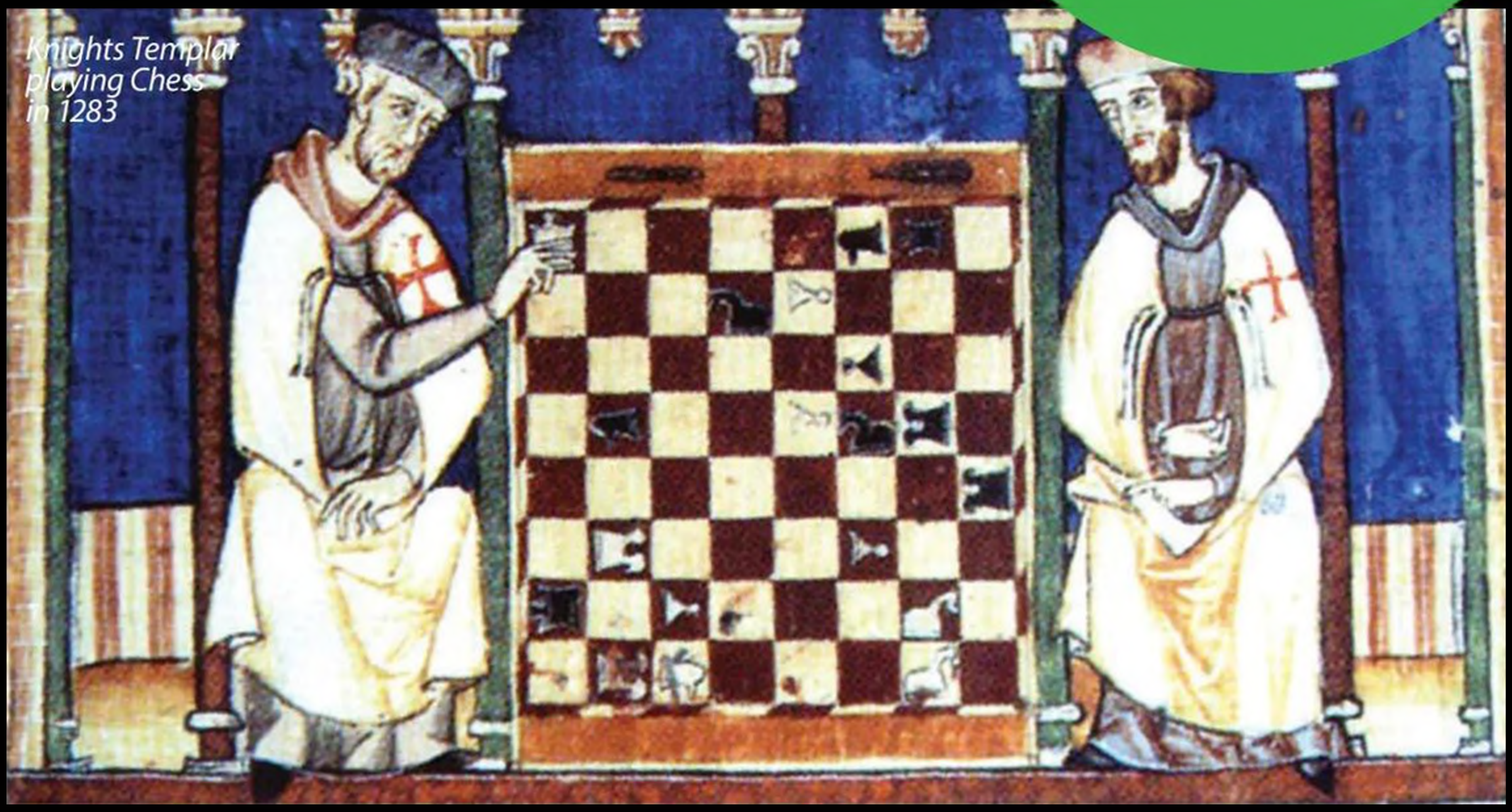
FACT

An exclusive club

As of 2014 there have been just 20 world champions in 128 years. The first champion was Prague-born Wilhelm Steinitz, who was crowned champion in 1886 and held the title for eight years.

Chess, in its original form, dates back around 1,500 years to the Hindu Gupta Empire in India, whose people were famous for their artistic and creative flair. They brought the game to Persia (modern-day Iran) around 600CE, calling it Chaturanga, Sanskrit for 'four parts'. It was played on an 8x8 board with ten pieces making up four different ranks: five soldiers, three cavalry pieces, a chariot and an elephant.

This game spread across Asia and the Middle East, the rules being adapted to suit local customs and traditions. In Persia, it was used to educate royalty in the art of strategy in war.


Knights Templar playing Chess in 1283

Once the Persian Empire made way for the Muslim Ottoman Empire, there was concern that the game would be banned under the Qur'an's anti-gambling laws, but the game instead flourished.

The game then spread to China around the year 800 and was hugely popular for its strategy. Chess then moved back westwards, being brought to Spain in the eighth century, Russia in the ninth century and England in 1012 with the Vikings.

Finally in 1100, the board began to look like the one we know today, §with alternating light and dark squares. The English began to tinker yet further with the rules, speeding up games by allowing the queen and bishop a much larger range of movements, so much so that the queen went from being the weakest to the strongest piece.

Czar Nicholas II of Russia coined the phrase 'Grandmaster', a term which now refers to a select group of people who have mastered the game and compete at the very highest level. Today there are fewer than 1,500 Grandmasters in the world, with Russia topping the list with 226 and Ukraine and USA joint second with 84 apiece.

Chess became a political tool during the Cold War between the USA and the Soviet Union in the 1970s. American Bobby Fischer was a fast-rising star of the game and threatened to loosen the stranglehold the Soviets had had on the World Chess title for nearly a quarter of a century. The pressure on both Fischer and his championship opponent Boris Spassky was enormous because victory for either side would be a huge statement of power.

Despite losing the first two games and looking out of his depth, Fischer won by 12.5 to 8.5 and claimed the coveted title, sparking wild celebrations among the Americans.

The game was very popular with the Moorish people of Spain

FACT

Chess: The Musical

After the split-up of Swedish pop group ABBA, Benny Andersson and Björn Ulvaeus worked together on a musical called *Chess*, focusing on the famous Cold War chess phenomenon.

Why play chess?

What are the social, cultural and mental advantages to playing the game of chess and how can they be improved upon over time?

There are many benefits to playing chess, no matter what your age is. Many young people nowadays don't have the same level of social interaction that children had in previous generations, so a sociable, cross-generational game is one that could prove to be of great benefit to people who need to have a boost to their self esteem or social skills.

It has been shown on many occasions that sports can provide people with a range of skills and benefits far beyond the obvious and as there are so many different elements to chess, it is little wonder that there is a wide range of studies showing the mental, social and, let's not forget, fun benefits of one of the world's oldest pastimes. Of course, there are a number of other ways that people can learn these skills, but chess has a surprising number of interesting benefits.

1 Problem solving

When you are not only trying to defeat your opponent with subtly skilful moves but also prevent yourself from being put into a trap, chess has a unique ability to help people deal with two objectives at once and teaches children to focus on secondary objectives.

A game of chess can be a fun and social experience

2 Concentration

One of the joys and frustrations of chess is that one false move can completely turn the tide of a game. If you accidentally lose your queen or miss an opportunity to take a vital opposition piece, the game could be up, so concentration is key, potentially over long periods of time.

3 Social interaction

Chess is a great way of getting to meet people of all walks of life. No matter what your age is or what language you speak, chess is universally understood, so anyone can walk into a new place and settle down into a game of chess and maybe make new friends.

4 Sense of teamwork

Despite chess being a solitary game, it actually is fantastic for teaching a young child the importance of working as a team. A queen can't defeat an entire enemy force by herself – she needs the help of those who, on the surface, are much less powerful than her.

5 It's fun!

Lastly, the game of chess is fun! It can be a serious game, with many tournaments happening every year, but the main aspect of this social game is enjoyment. You can pick it up at any age and play it with anyone. It can be as serious, or as joyful as you make it.

Buying a board

What to look for when buying a chessboard

On the surface, it shouldn't really be difficult to buy a chess set. All you really need is a board measuring eight squares by eight squares and 32 pieces – 16 black and 16 white. However, there is a little more to it than that. One of the key things to think about when buying a chess set is who you are buying it for and for what purpose. If you are buying for a young person who is just learning, it is worth buying a set in which the pieces are very clearly defined as their characters, so bishops cannot get muddled up with rooks, and kings and queens are clearly differentiated to avoid confusion and error. It might even be worth buying a custom or novelty set with popular TV or gaming characters so each piece is easily recognised and the child retains interest.

However, if you are buying a quality set to keep as an heirloom, you cannot go wrong with wooden boards and marble or glass pieces, as they will retain and increase their long-term value.

Wooden board

A simple wooden board is one of the easiest places to begin. Ensure that the board is solid and smoothly finished. You do not want one that will break after a few years of use. If you want that extra touch of class, a board with hand-carved engravings will stand the test of time and retain a timeless, classic feel.

Plastic board

For starter players, a plastic board might be the best to invest in. Firstly, it will be the safest as there is little risk of splinters, especially if it is not looked after brilliantly. It will also not matter too much if it is the object of a temper tantrum, as can so easily happen when someone is learning a game and doesn't win too often.

Glass board

This really is the crème de la crème of chessboards. Elegant, refined and smooth-looking, a glass chessboard will look good in any environment. When buying a glass board, make sure that the squares are easy to make out and, again, try to keep it somewhere that it won't get chipped, because that will reduce the value.

Marble board

Marble boards are fairly heavy and impractical, but they do look gorgeous and provide one of the most satisfying clinks you'll ever hear as you place your piece down. Be extremely careful with these as they are prone to smashing, but will be the most resilient when it comes to chips and breakages from normal play.

Getting started

All the things you will need in order to be able to play chess, from the board to knowledge of the rules

Choose a set and start developing your playing strategy

So what exactly will you need to get before you are able to properly enjoy playing chess? Firstly, the board is your most crucial purchase. As mentioned previously, there is a wide range of options available to the budding chess player. You have to decide what kind of commitment you want to make to the game before deciding a level of expenditure on the board and pieces, as sets can range from a few pounds to several thousand pounds. You will also need to decide what pieces you will buy. Many chessboards come with pieces included, but you may wish to buy a set separately. The two most important pieces to get right are the knights and the king. The knights are often the most intricate, and a well-carved/shaped knight could make or break a set. Similarly, the king is the most important piece on the board, so you will want to get one that stands tall and looks impressive. Everything comes down to taste and cost, but it is always recommended to get a decent set that will last.

You will also need to develop a strategy for playing. While at first you might think that every game progresses at random, you will eventually try to become a player that reflects your personality. You might be cautious, unwilling to even sacrifice a pawn in pursuit of victory, or you might be brash and bold, happy to see a few of your own pieces go down in pursuit of your target.

Alongside your player strategy is your opening gambit. This is essentially your first few moves. It is a good idea to not only have a few of these in your locker, designed to gain an early advantage, but it is also handy to recognise a move your opposition is making in order to head them off at the earliest opportunity. This is a skill that will come with time, however. The other final option is a chess clock that measure each player's move time in a timed match.

Electronic boards

In chess there is an option to go electronic and bring the game into the 21st century

Image courtesy of Hans Pees

Practise your strategy against a computer opponent

As technology has advanced, computer scientists have been keen to teach computers how to play chess. There was a famous match in 1997 where the IBM computer Deep Blue beat reigning world champion Garry Kasparov over six games.

Electronic chessboards allow a player to practise against a computer opponent. Computers are able to analyse hundreds of moves every second and work out statistically the best move. This will allow players to learn how to play against a purely logical machine and try out different strategies without having to engage a human opponent for training purposes.

They can be hooked up to a range of different devices and chess programs, some even allowing you to play matches against opposition over the internet, while still having a physical board and pieces in front of you. They will usually have a USB connection, while some can work wirelessly via Bluetooth.

Teach kids well and they may soon start beating you!

Chess with kids

How to ensure children have fun learning the game

Chess, with all its different pieces, rules and move sets, can be quite a daunting game to take up for a young child. Therefore, the key is to make it a fun and rewarding experience. The first step is making the game seem accessible. This could be as simple as buying a novelty board with their favourite cartoon characters as pieces.

The next step is drip-feeding them information on how to play the game. It can be quite boggling to remember the different ways the pieces move, so you can build it up by letting the pieces move anywhere, then steadily introducing the piece-specific moves so they learn steadily.

While they'll need to learn how to lose a game, it is important to be encouraging and not too ruthless, letting occasional mistakes and gameplay indiscretions slide, steadily becoming stricter with the rules.

If the rules of the game are slowly drip-fed to a child instead of piled on all at once, it will help them to feel like they are learning and improving, rather than getting bogged down in the detail of the game and becoming frustrated and bored. When beginning to read, you start off learning how to recognise letters, then words then finally sentences; so in chess, you learn the aim of the game, how to play it and then the finer points.

Encourage the child to experiment with new moves and allow them a bit of grace when starting in order to keep the fun alive. Over time, you can then point out mistakes made and offer the chance to redo a move so that they can learn without losing a piece. Obviously this should only be the case while they're still learning because once they've mastered the basics, the next step is planning ahead and avoiding being placed in a trap.

Chess could be seen as being less interesting than a videogame or active sport, so the key to interesting a child in chess is to allow them to appreciate the intricacies, the drama and the variation that chess provides.

> "In chess, you learn the aim of the game, how to play it and then the finer points"

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Going further

Once you've mastered the basics of chess, moving onto the next stage is the key to enjoying and advancing your skills

Practice will help to improve your game, wherever you play

It is said of a lot of pursuits that learning to play or do it is easy, learning to play or do it well is very difficult. This is true for playing golf, a musical instrument, even poker. Therefore, the real challenge to the budding chess Grandmaster is how to advance to the next level. Building on the basic understanding of the rules is key to going on to bigger and better things and getting more out of the game. Repeated playing of the game will teach you a number of things. Opening gambits are things that you can practise time and time again because at the start of the game the pieces are always in the same place. A selection of opening gambits can establish you with a strong position in the game, from which point you can push home your advantage.

The later stages are trickier to practise as games rarely follow a similar pattern, but enough games ought to help you recognise situations and remember what went well before and what didn't.

Ways of improving your play include playing without a queen so you are not reliant on it, or slashing the time in which you get to make your move so you are forced to think more quickly. This means in competitive games you would be able to deal with the loss of your queen or feel like you have much more time to think about your next move.

Ultimately, in order to get very good at chess, you will need to push yourself out of your comfort zone. Handicapping yourself might be frustrating, but it will teach you how to deal with gameplay situations and should ensure you won't make rash decisions during a game if you suffer a setback, since you've already prepared for it.

Chess is almost unique in sport and games in that it is spectacularly unlikely that after a few dozen moves you will be in a position that you have been in before, so all you can really do to improve your own game is become an expert at opening moves, blocking opposition moves and dealing with adversity.

Accessories

A few extras that will help you get the most out of your chess playing

Travel set

Price: £2 Website: www.amazon.co.uk

Chess is an ideal companion for long journeys as it is something that is easily set up and put away and you'll never play quite the same game twice. Make sure it's a magnetic set, though.

You
Cody
Play

Chess videogame

Price: £4.99 Website: www.amazon.co.uk

The digital age has been calling chess for a while and there isn't much point in resisting it. You can play a computer on different difficulty levels for practice or fun and the variance is still there.

Chess Carry Bag

Price: £19.95 Website: www.chessbaron.co.uk

What with the board, pieces, chess clock and scorecard, there is a lot of valuable and breakable kit to take around with you, so a chess carry kit would save you a lot of bother and looks great.

Setting up

The ultimate guide and step-by-step tutorials will teach you the basics from the ways the different pieces move to how chess notation works

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“A chessboard is beautifully simple, consisting of 64 alternating light and dark squares”

About the chessboard

On your journey to becoming a chess Grandmaster, your first stop is to get to know the game's famous chequerboard platform

Top tip

Which way is up?

To figure out the 'top' and 'bottom' of a seemingly uniform board, first make sure that the 'white square is on the right', as shown in the diagram on page 21. The player that is using the white chess pieces is playing from the 'bottom' of the board.

A chessboard is beautifully simple. Consisting of 64 alternating light and dark squares, it provides players with an easy-to-understand board on which to play a game that can often get rather complicated and competitive!

A chessboard is usually made of wood or vinyl, although there are many different variants, and its light and dark squares are always arranged in eight rows of eight. These squares can often be made of contrasting types of wood, or even be completely different colours to the traditional black and white, but they will always be clearly defined as 'light' and 'dark'. The small squares are all the same size, creating one larger square chessboard that is easily recognisable the world over. Chessboards can come in all sizes, but the internationally recognised standard as set by the World Chess Federation (FIDE) is that the small squares that make up the board ought to have sides measuring 5-6.5cm, and that the board should be rigid.

Folding chessboards are useful for storage, but since a game of chess can often go on for a long time (the longest recorded game lasted over 20 hours), a rigid board allows players to leave the game and come back to it with ease.

1 White on the right

For the board to be set up correctly, the square on the bottom-right facing each player should be white. Remember this with the phrase 'white on the right'.

2 Ranks

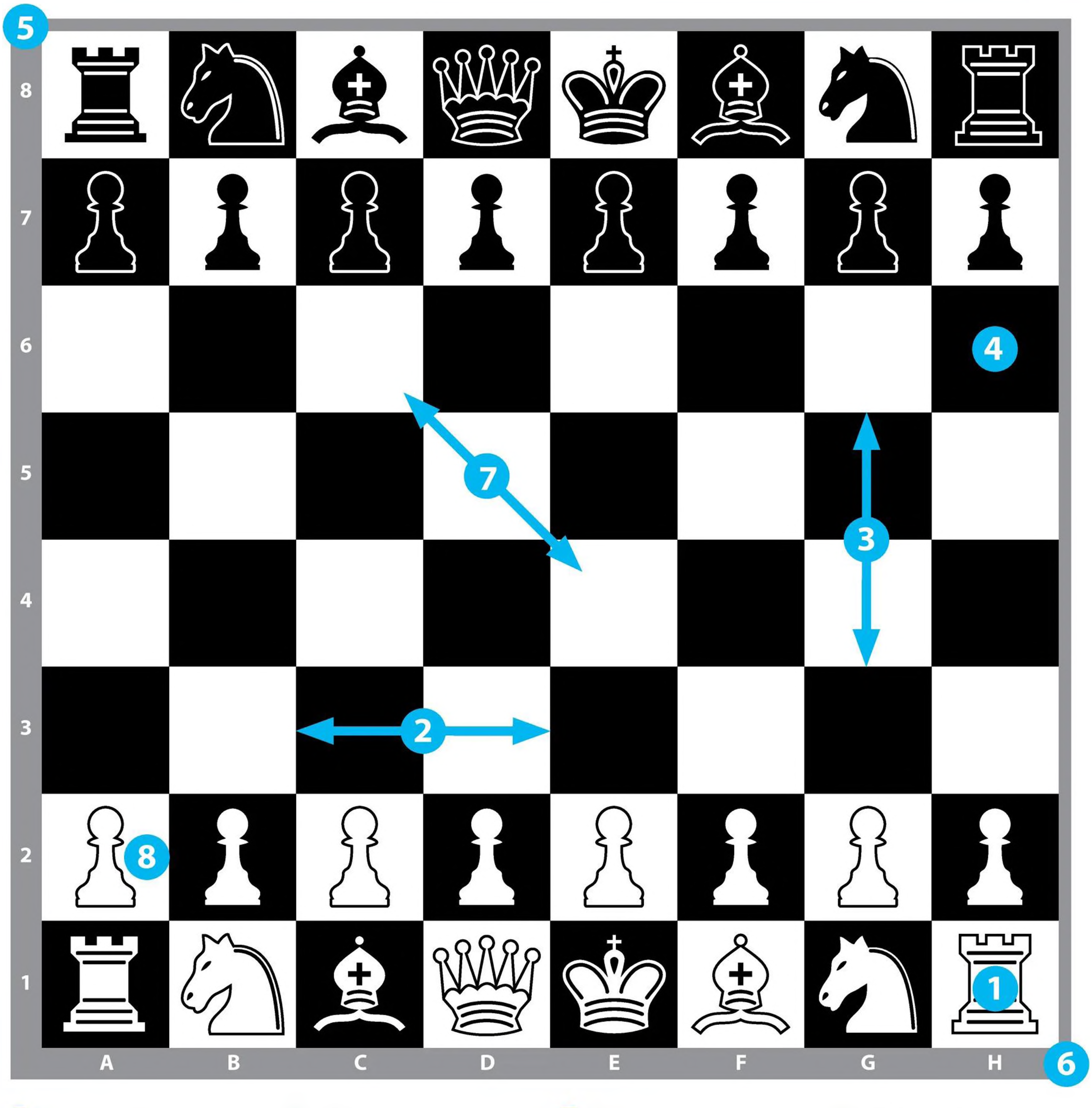
The horizontal rows of squares that run across a chessboard are known as ranks. There are eight of these on the board, each with eight squares.

3 Files

The vertical columns of squares that run down the chessboard are known as files. There are eight squares in each file, and eight files on the board.

4 Types of board

The dark and light squares on a chessboard may vary in colour. Some may be made of different types of wood, or might be printed onto a plastic board.



5 Rank labels

Each of the Ranks found on the chessboard is labelled using the numbers 1 to 8. This starts from 1 at the very bottom of board and then goes upwards.

6 File labels

Each file is labelled with letters from A to H, left to right. Each square on the chessboard can now be identified by rank and file (eg h6), like reading a map.

7 Diagonals

The lines of squares that can be seen criss-crossing over the chessboard are simply known as 'diagonals'. These contain squares all of the same colour.

8 Size of squares

The size of the squares on a chessboard may differ from board to board, but they are usually twice the diameter of a pawn's base.

The king

Learn all about this crucial piece on the board and get to grips with how its regal relevance affects your game of chess

Of all the pieces on the chessboard, the king could be considered the most important. It is the piece that needs to be kept safe at all costs, can never be captured and if it is placed in irreparable danger then the whole game is lost.

However, the king could also be seen as the most useless piece. Its numerical value is 0, because it cannot be traded for any other chess pieces. But in terms of movement, the king could be ranked about 3.5, as it can move one square in any direction. If there are rival pieces sitting on the squares, the king can capture them.

The king cannot move onto a square that puts it in danger and if it is threatened by the opponent's pieces (known as check), it is up to the other chess pieces to protect the king. For example, if the white queen has moved into a spot that directly threatens the black king, this is check, and the black player has three options. The first is to move the king out of harm's way; however, the black player must first assess if this move is safe, because the king cannot move itself into danger. Moving the black king out of the path of the white queen may place it in the path of another white piece.

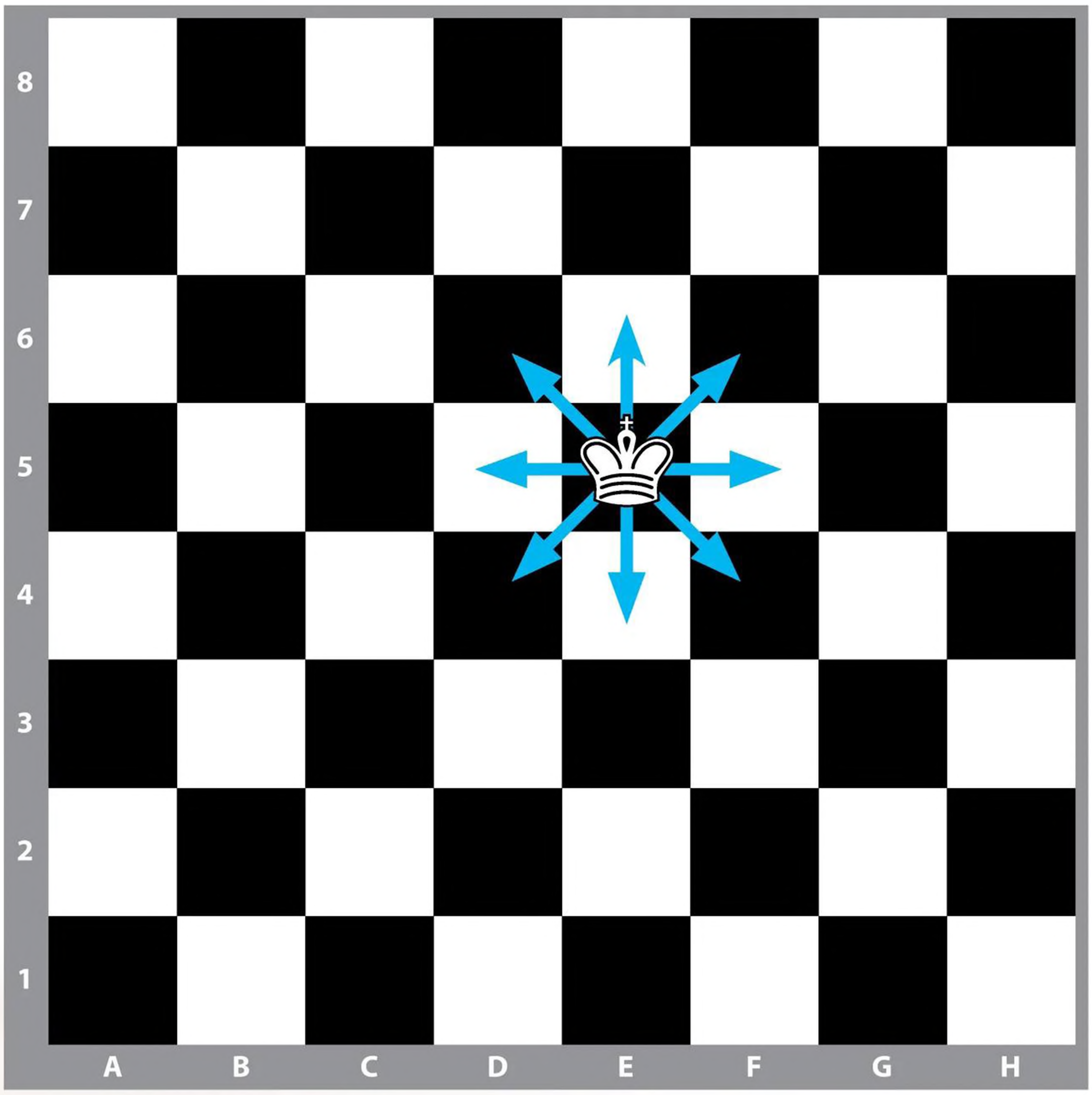
The second option in this situation is to move another black piece into the path of the white queen in order to shield the black king. However, this risks capture for the black piece by the white queen, which will once again put the black king in danger after the capture.

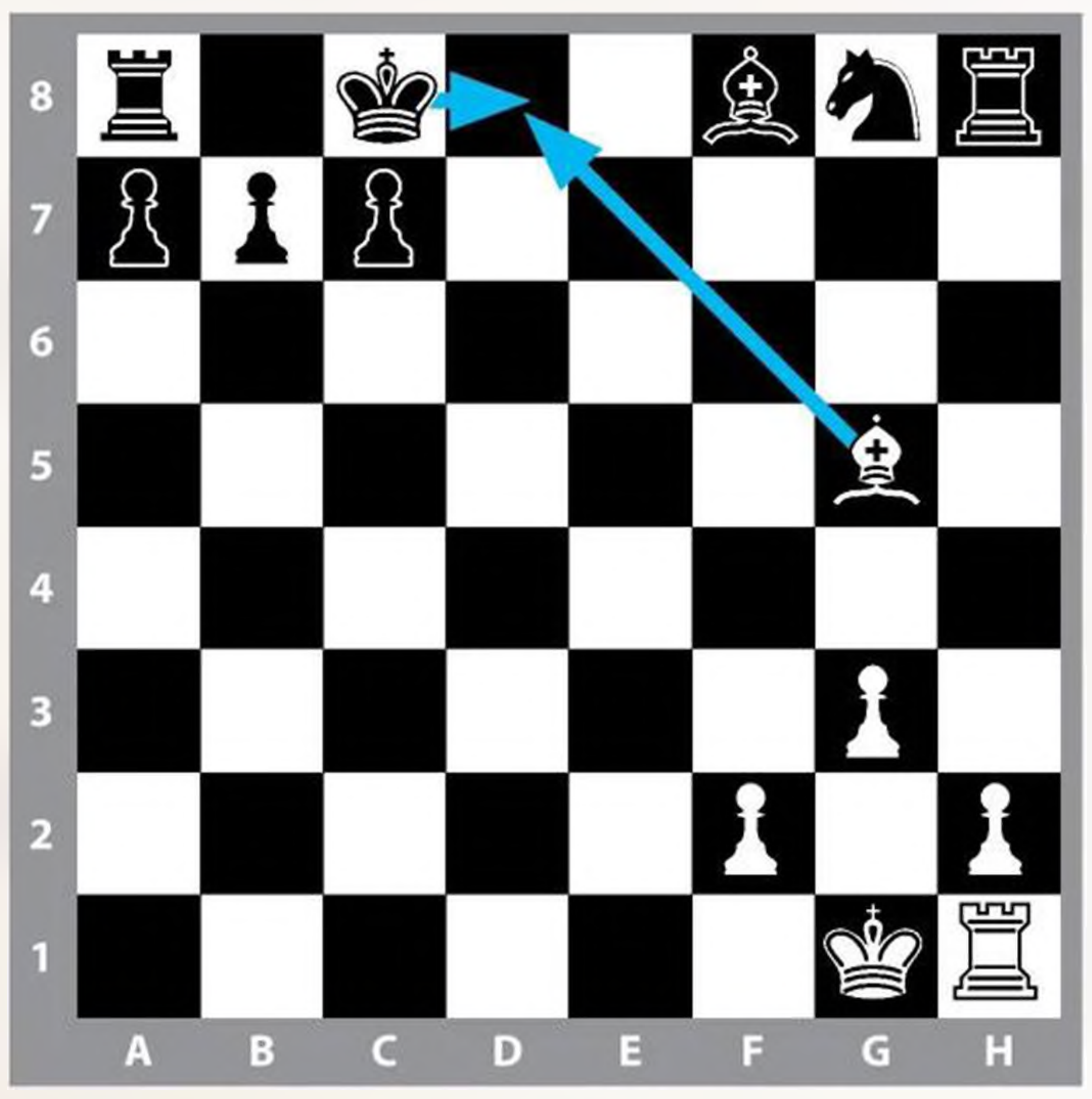
The third option is to play a black chess piece to capture the white queen and remove the threat to the black king. It's up to the player to devise a strategy and weigh up his options on how to guide the king to safety!

"In the middlegame, the king is merely an extra, but in the endgame, he is one of the star actors"

Aaron Nimzowitsch

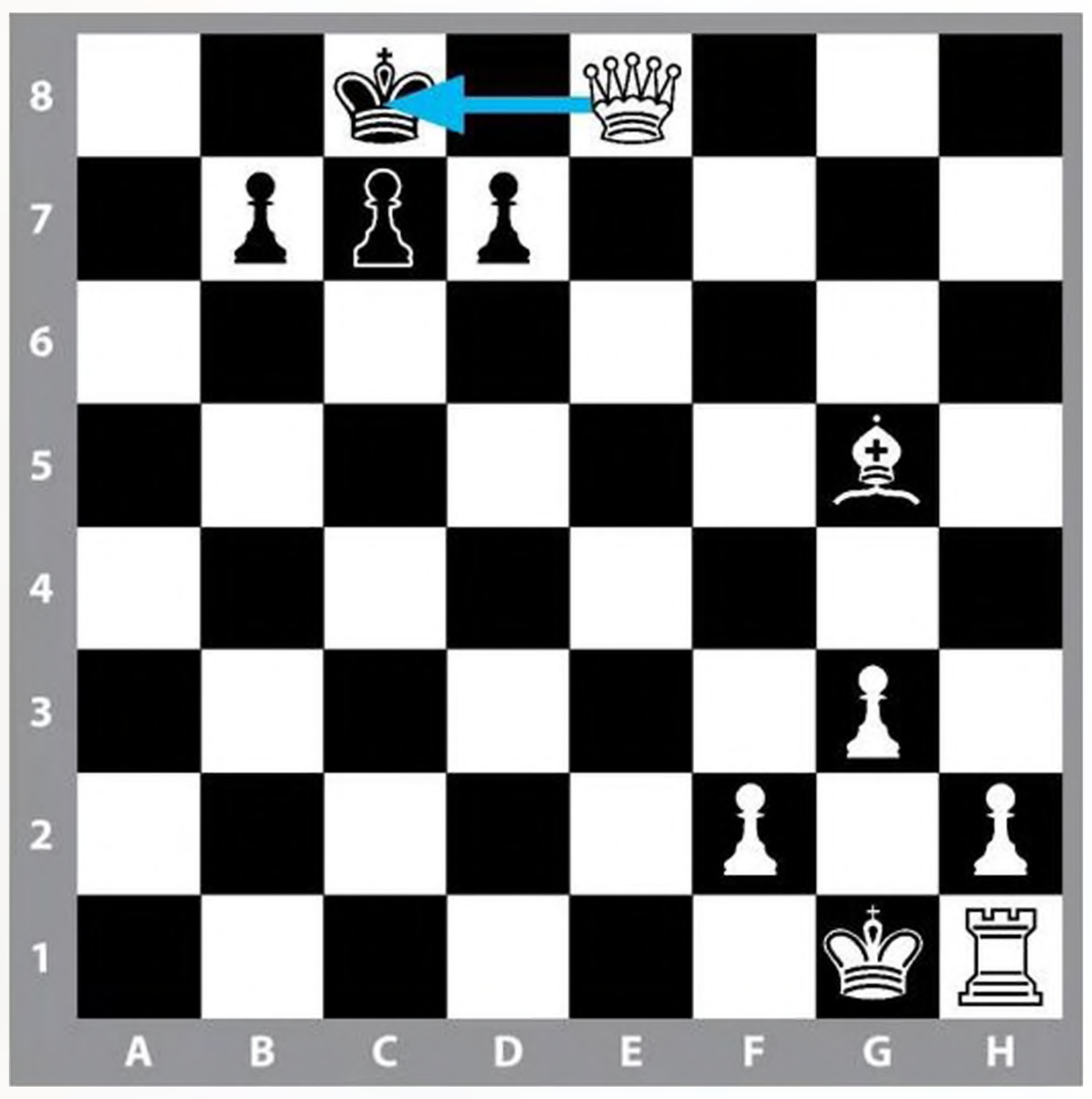
The king's movements





Protecting the king

The king may never move itself into check. For instance, here, if the king were to move one to the right, into the direct line of a bishop, this would be check.



Checkmate

If the king is in a position where it cannot move out of check, or no other pieces can move to protect it, this is known as 'checkmate' and the game is lost.

KINGS SIDE BY SIDE?

Understand the reasoning behind this illegal move

Given that the king can capture its opponent's pieces that are occupying spaces on the chessboard directly around it (remember that the king can only move one square in any direction) yet not threatening it, this means that one king may not stand directly next to the opponent's king on the chessboard. This move is not allowed according to the rules of chess because a player cannot move his king into a position where it could be captured. Therefore both kings would be in danger if they were standing side by side, since kings can capture other chess pieces that are directly next to them.

The queen

Powerful and mighty, the queen rules the chessboard. Here you'll learn the wisest way to wield it

The queen is the most valuable chess piece on the board. It can move to any unoccupied square and travel for any number of squares up, down, side to side and diagonally across the board – combining the movement capabilities of both the rook and the bishop pieces. Because of its ease of movement, the queen is able to transfer its power across the chessboard in one strong movement, whereas bishops and rooks may need to use two to cover the same distance. The queen can also take any opposing pieces in its path.

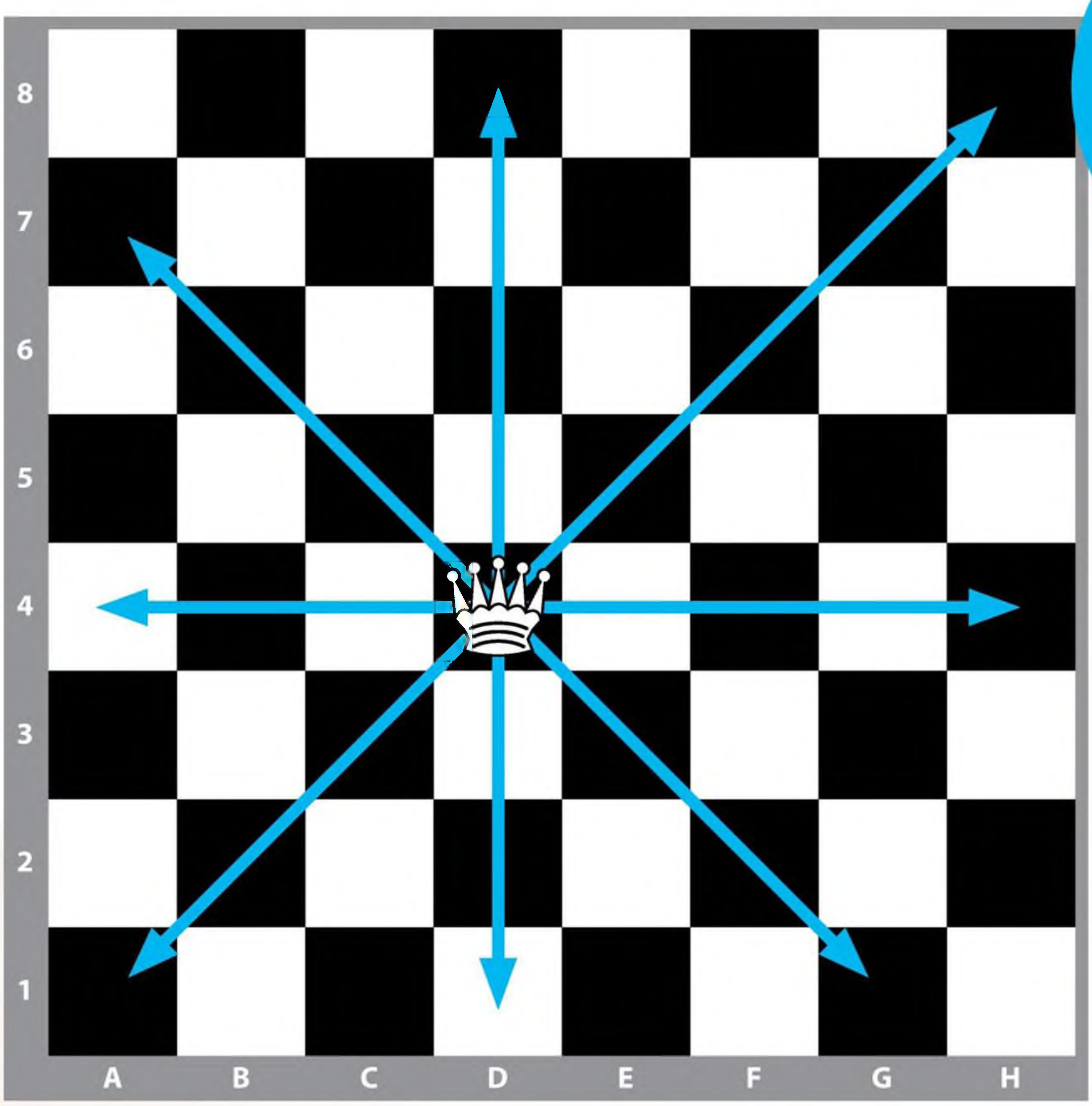
Because it is able to cover all 64 squares of the board, the queen has a value of 9 points – the highest possible. This is equal to the values of one bishop, one rook and one pawn combined. With this in mind, you can see why it's almost always a bad idea to exchange your queen for anything other than the queen of your opponent. However, there are some games that will play to forfeit a queen. Although this is a risky manoeuvre, sometimes this may be what it takes to win the game – it's all in the strategy!

Believe it or not, it is also possible to double the power of your queen. If a player's pawn is able to reach the furthest rank away from its starting position, it is able to become any chess piece of the player's choosing, known as 'pawn promotion'. Due to the value of the queen, this is the most usual choice and so it is possible for a player to have two queens playing on the chessboard at a time.

"Combinations with a queen sacrifice are among the most striking and memorable"

Anatoly Karpov

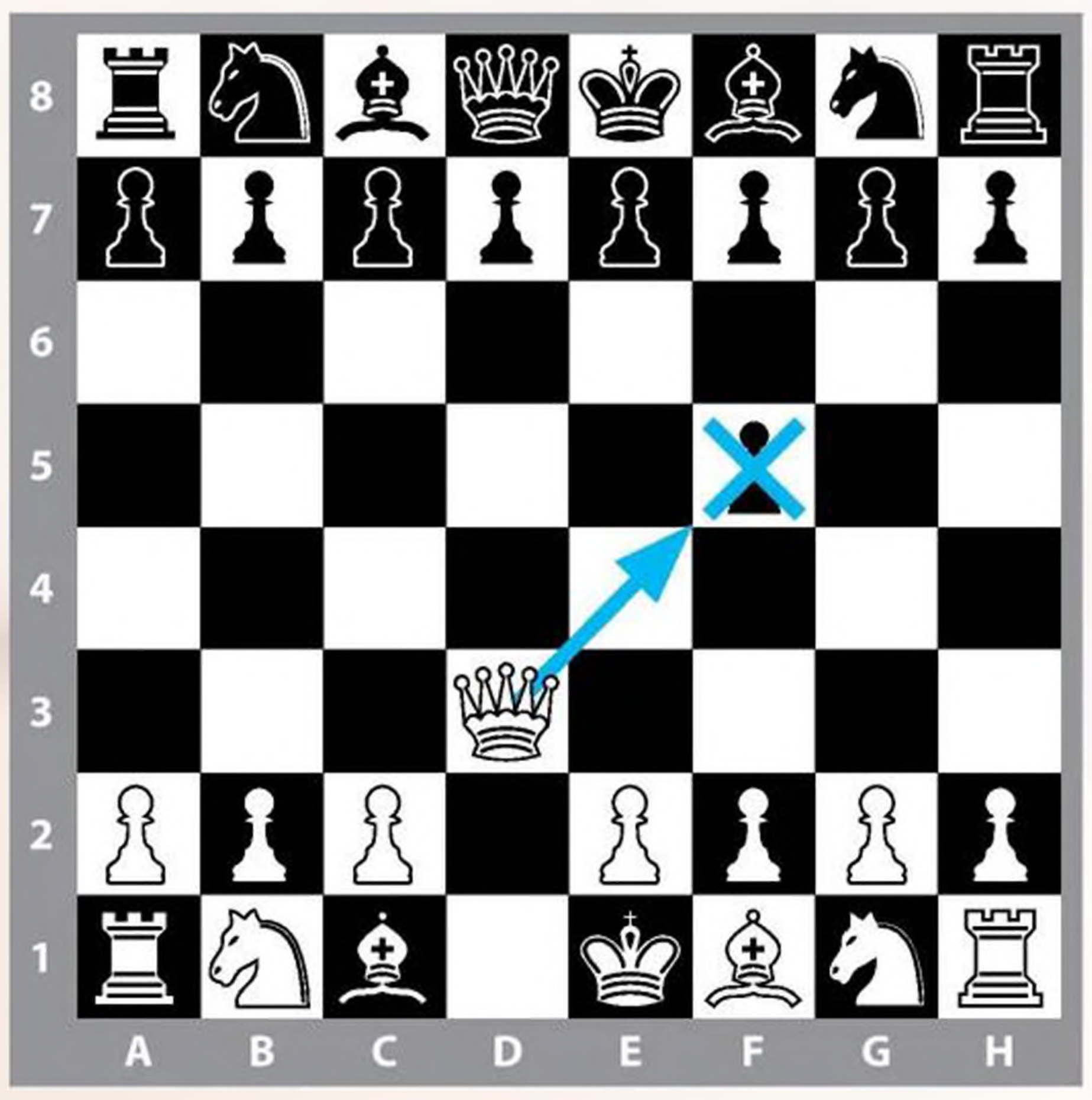
The queen's movements



Top tip

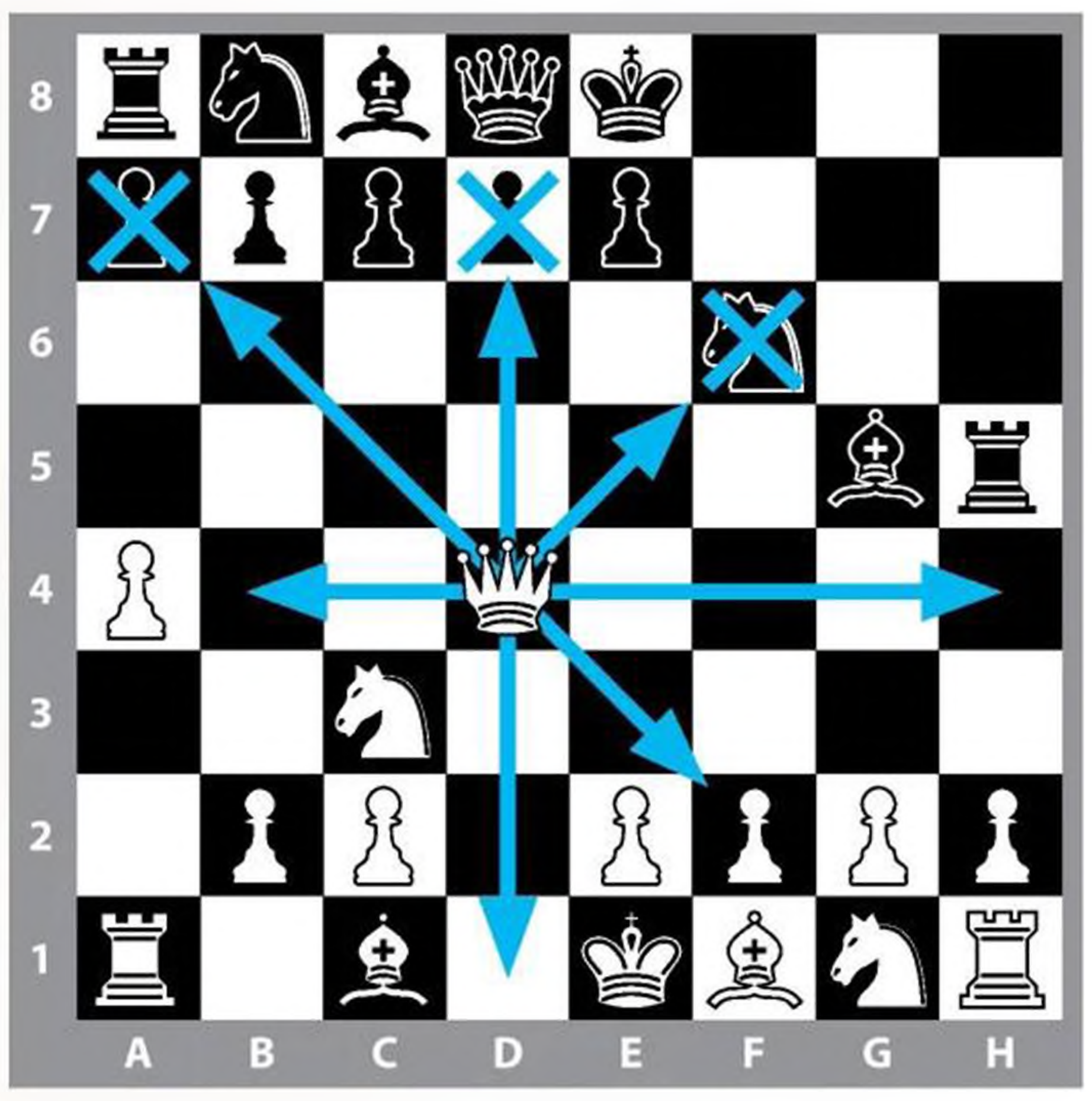
Play with two

When you reach the other side of the board with a pawn, you may promote it to something else, commonly it would be chosen to promote it for another queen. If one queen is already in play, turn a rook on its head!



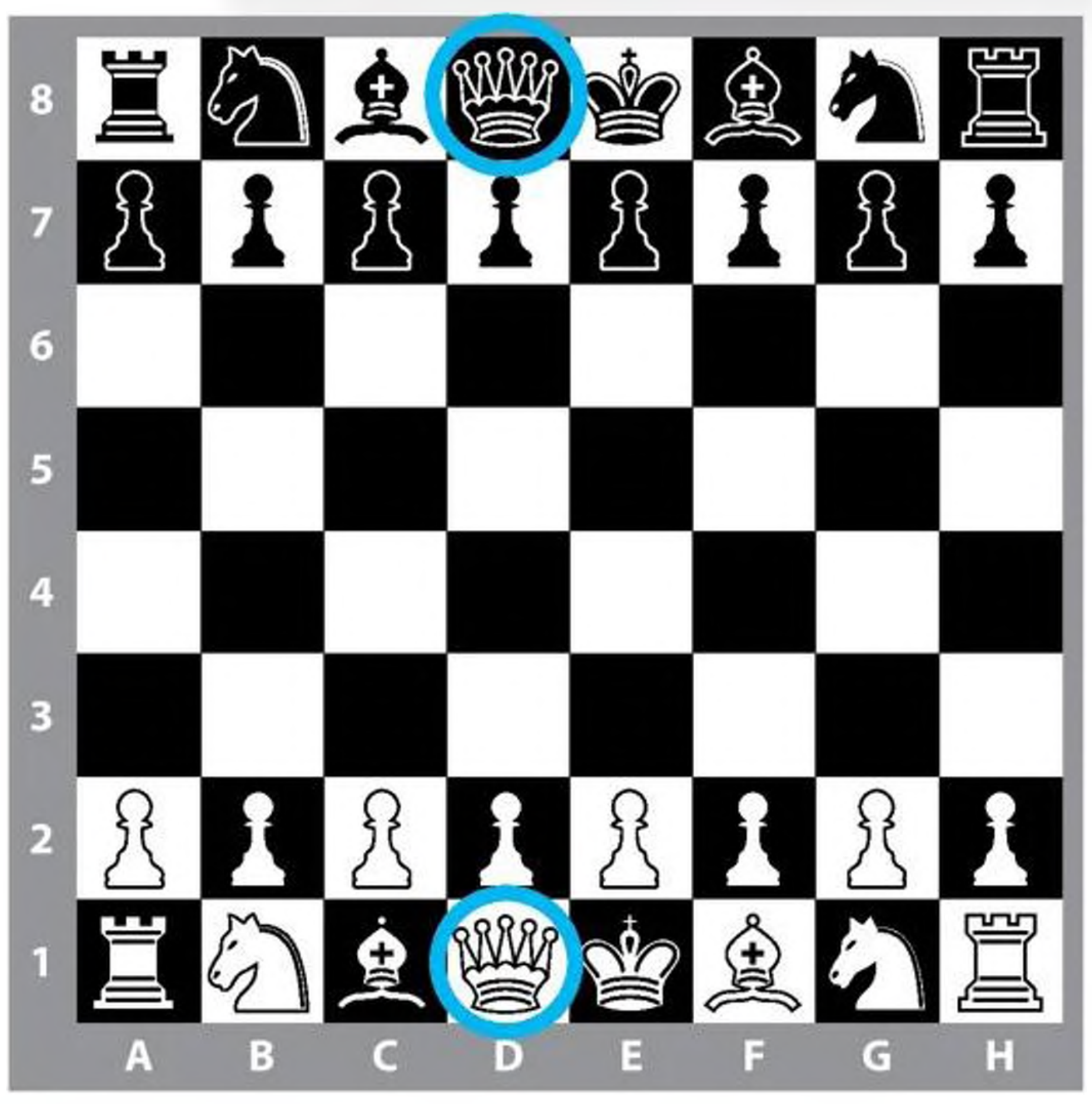
Queen captures

As the queen can move in any direction for any number of squares, it can capture any opponent's piece in its path, but it must replace the piece on that square.



Queen limitations

Although the queen is powerful, it can't jump over pieces and it can't turn corners. It is limited to straight lines and can only take one piece per move.



Placement on the board

Providing that the chessboard is set up correctly (white on the right, remember), the queen for each player always starts on the square of its own colour.

The rook

The rook is the second most powerful piece to play on the chessboard. Read on to find out why, and how to use them

Rooks, sometimes referred to as castles, are known as 'major pieces' and are stronger than bishops or knights. Every chess game starts with four rooks on the board, two for each player. Each of these rooks has a value of 5 points, making them second only to the queen (valued at 9 points) when it comes to manoeuvrability and power. Rooks can move both forwards and backwards, but may only go in one direction in a given move.

Rooks can cruise their way across the chessboard over any number of squares as necessary, either horizontally or vertically. This means that they always have the potential to attack 14 squares, which is over 20 per cent of the chessboard!

However, rooks cannot jump over pieces and cannot turn corners, which provides some limitation. Their movement is impeded by other pieces around them on the board (of both friendly and opposing sides), but they can capture chess pieces of the opponent if need be.

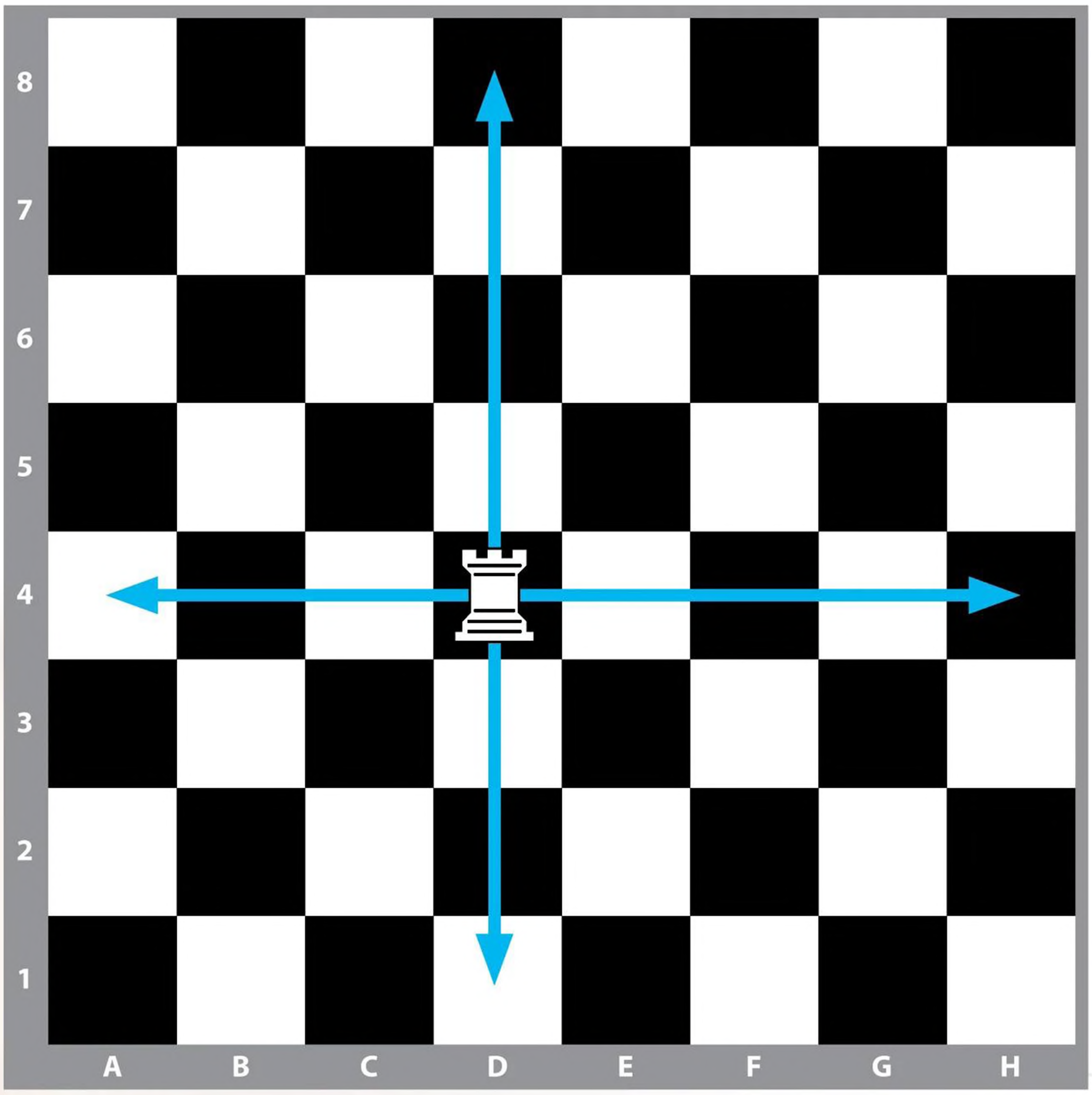
If two rooks from the same side are both on the same file (vertical squares) or rank (horizontal squares), they support one another and are known as 'doubled rooks'.

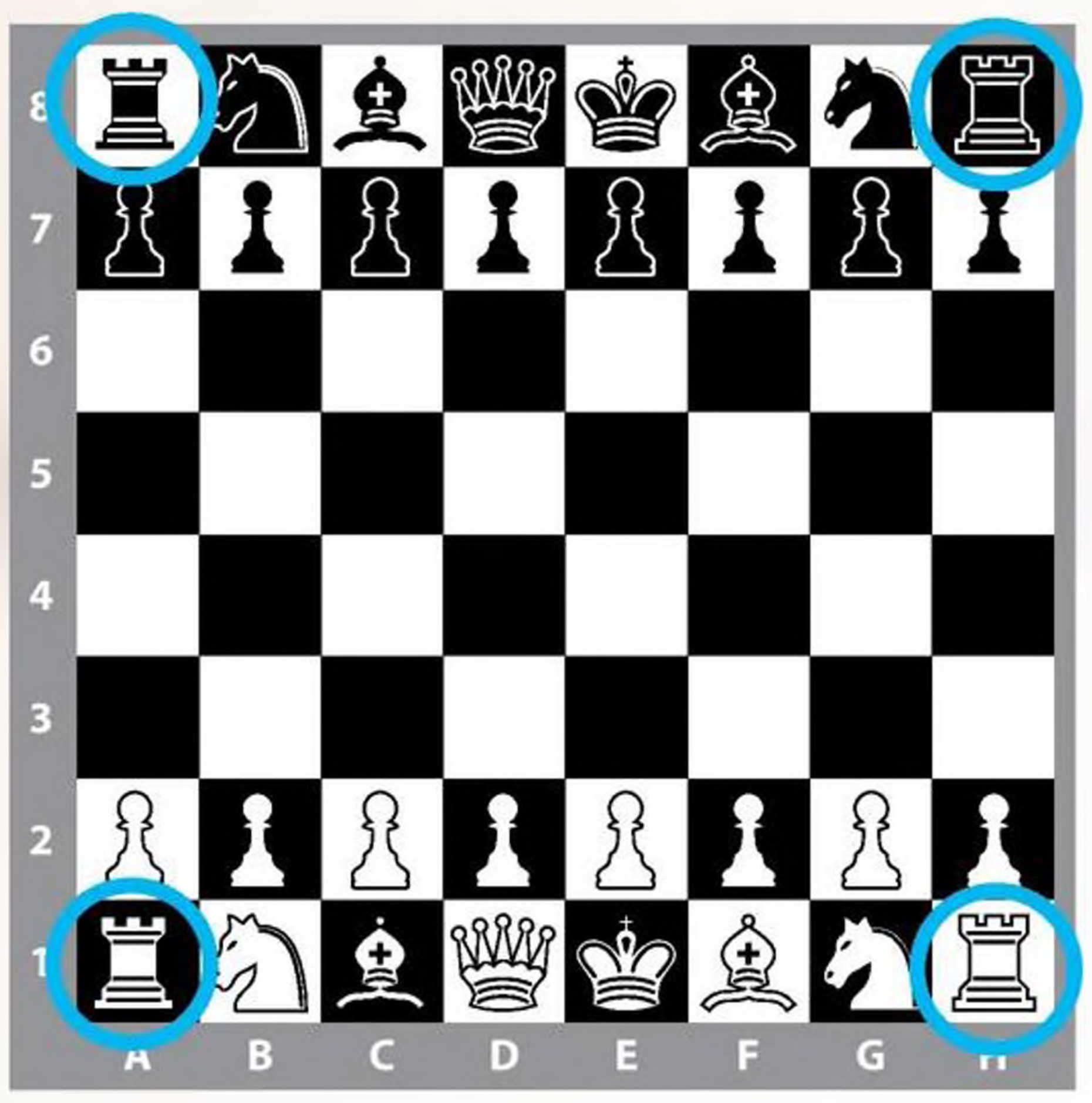
The rooks sit behind the pawns to begin the game and so, because of this, they are more powerful at the endgame (chess-speak for 'the end of the game'), when the board is unencumbered by so many other chess pieces from both sides. Rooks work best on open files or open ranks.

"Even the best Grandmasters in the world have had to work hard to acquire the technique of rook endings"

Paul Keres

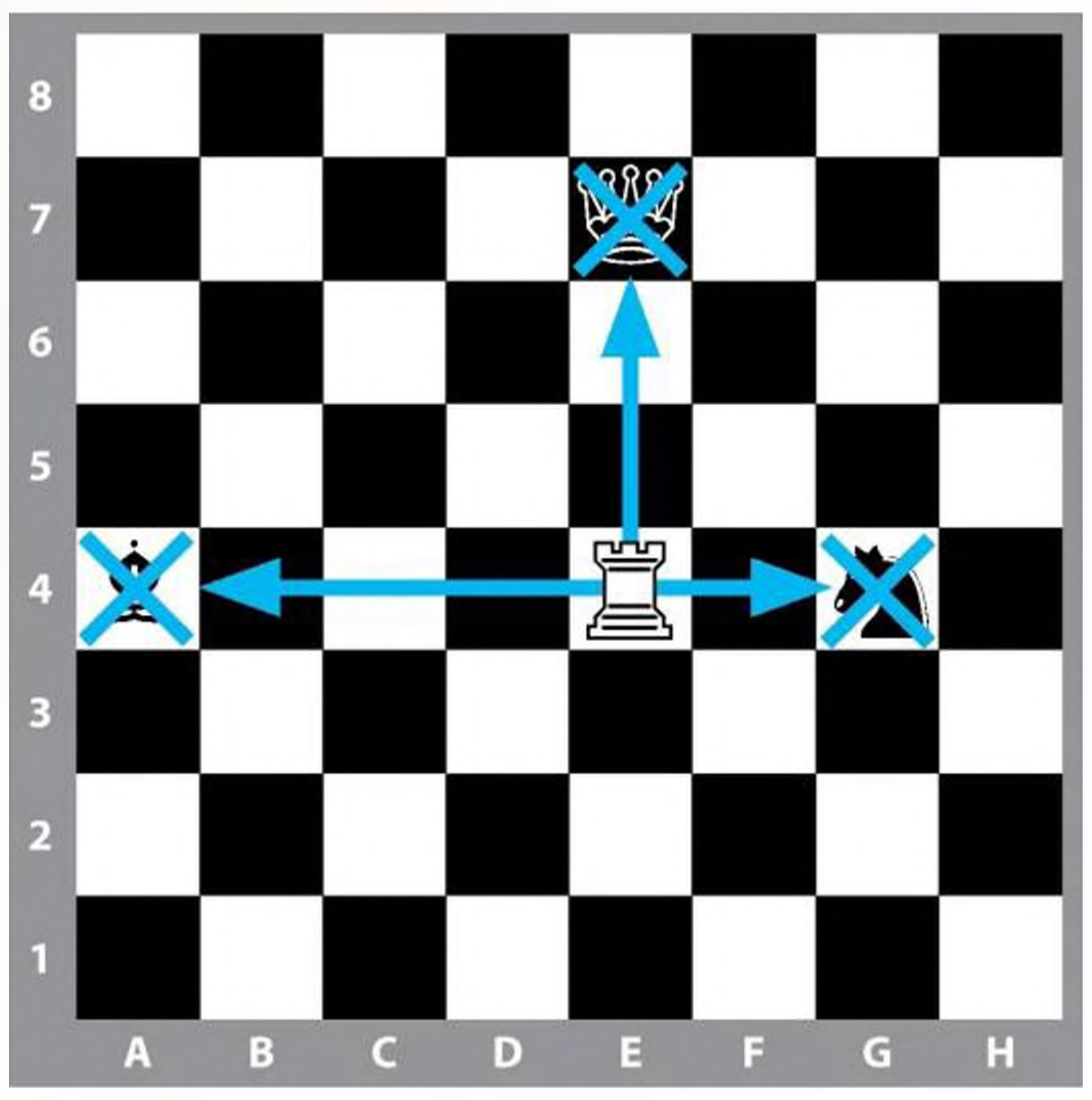
The rook's movements





Chessboard placement

Each player begins a game of chess with two rooks. These are placed at the four outer corners of the chessboard, with a pawn in front and a knight to one side.



Capture by rook

As they can move up, down and side-to-side, rooks are able to capture any opposing piece in their path and replace the piece on that particular chessboard square.

ABOUT CASTLING

An unusual move involving a rook and the king

Castling is the only move in chess where two pieces are moved at once, and it involves a rook and the king moving to effectively switch places. This has the advantage of putting the king in a safer position, while getting the rook into action at the centre of the board.

To make the move, the king moves two squares towards a rook and then the rook moves to the square on the opposite side of the one the king now sits on. You can't perform castling if your king or rook has already been moved, the king is in check or will be when it castles, or if there are any chess pieces in between the king and the rook.

The bishop

On these pages you'll get to learn the bare bishop basics, and how to use the masters of the diagonals on your chessboard

There are four bishops in a game of chess, two for each player. Bishops of each side start off on a white and a black square, flanking the king and queen. They can be differentiated by where they begin on the chessboard; for example, the bishop that begins the game next to the queen is known as the 'queen's bishop' and the one beginning next to the king is known as the 'king's bishop'. These pieces can emulate the diagonal movement of the queen but not the horizontal or vertical movement of the rooks.

Bishops can move both forward and backward on their diagonal lines, and have to stay on the colour that they started on. So, the white bishop that begins on a white square can only move on the diagonal lines of the white squares on the chessboard. Similarly, the white bishop that starts on the black square can only move on the diagonal black squares of the chessboard. The same applies to the black bishops.

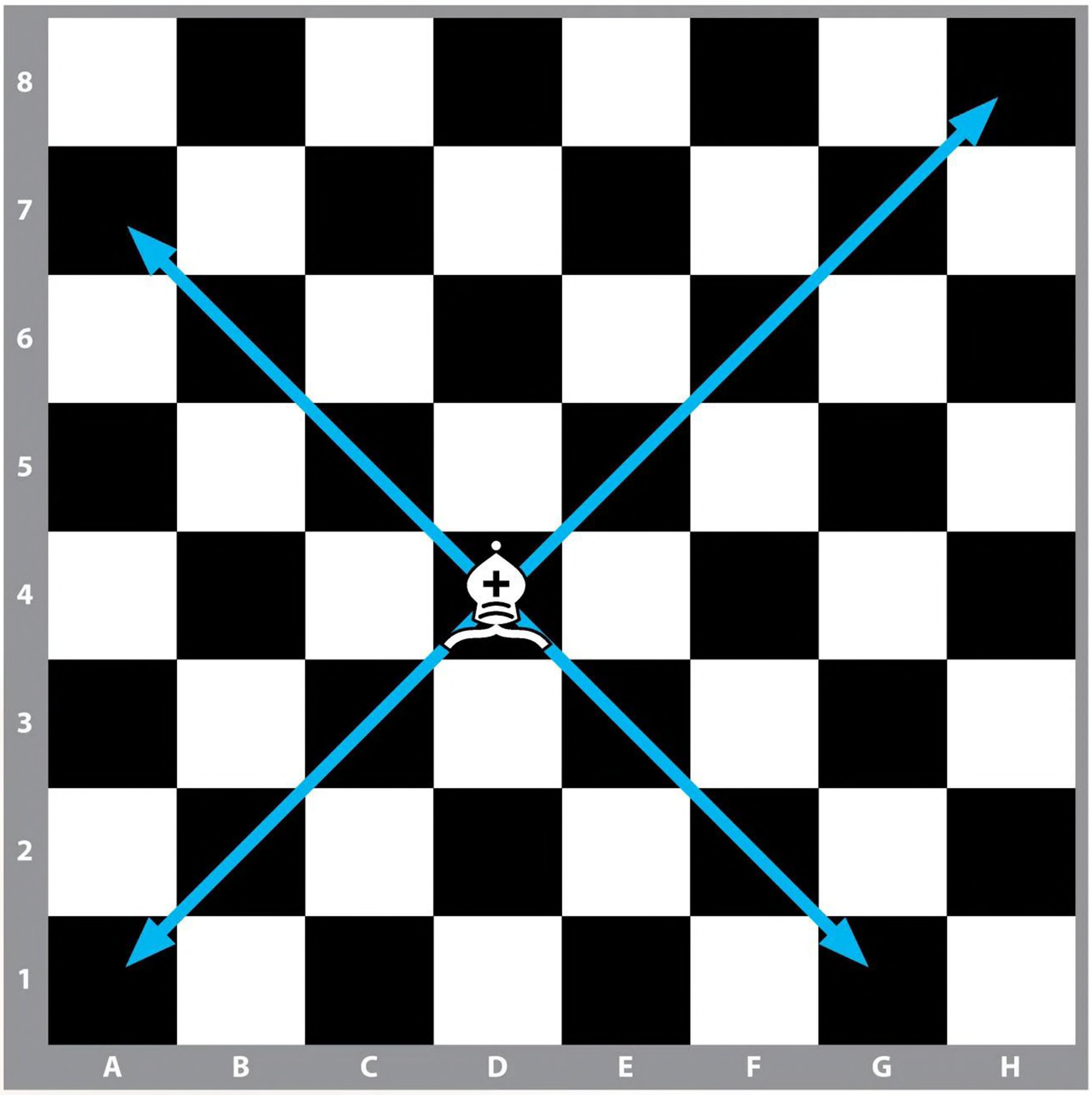
These chess pieces have a value of 3 points, equal to three pawns or one knight, and can control up to 13 squares on the board at a time. They cannot jump over pieces, and their path must be clear in order to move. Bishops capture in much the same way as they move – they can take a chess piece of the opposing side that stands in their path, and must replace the piece on that square once the capture has been made.

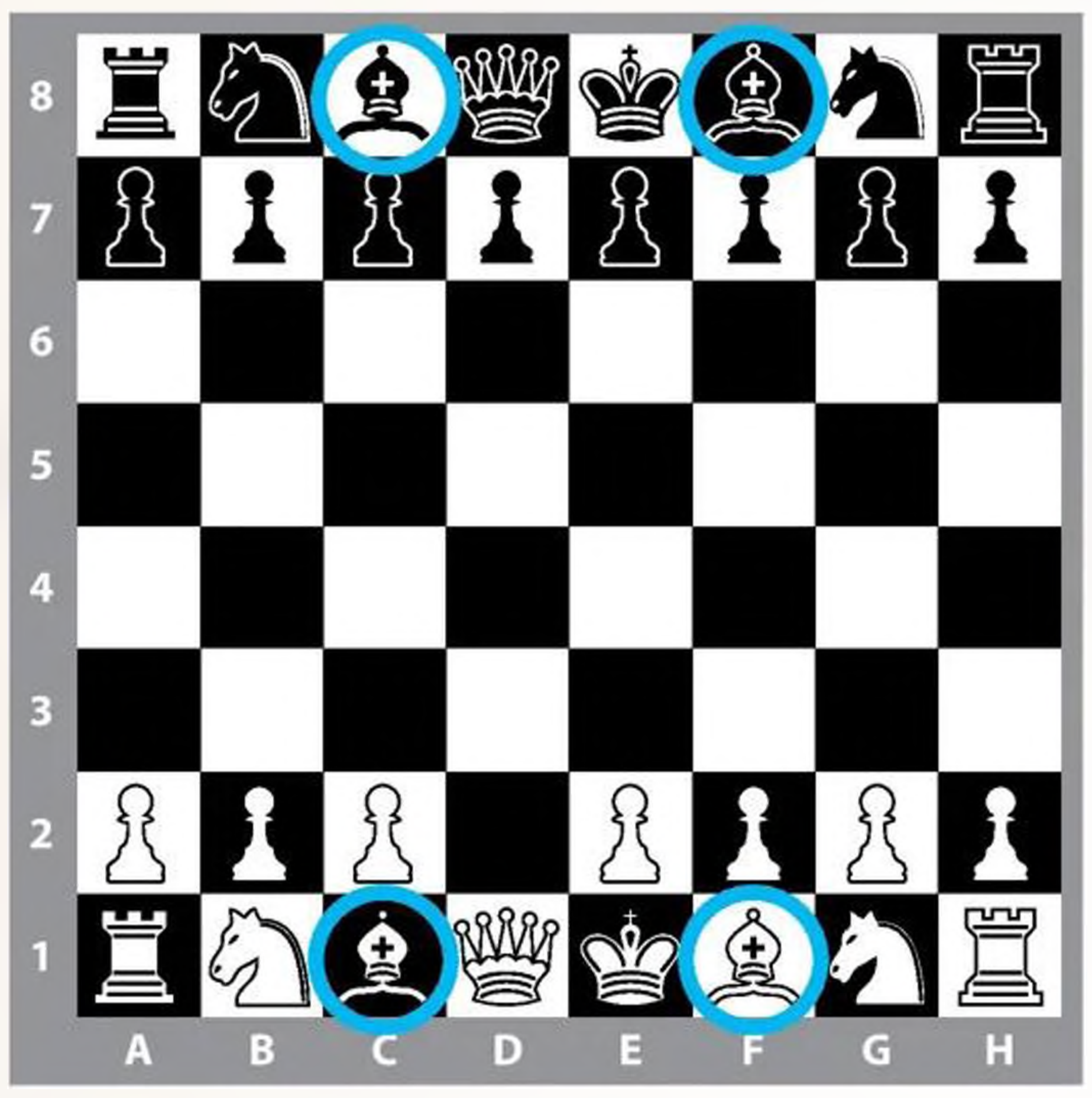
A lot like rooks, bishops are often most useful in the endgame, where the board is clearer of other chess pieces and the bishops are able to command the diagonals and be put to best use.

"While some are as loath to trade a bishop for a knight as a Cadillac for a Chevrolet, others are prepared to do so without hesitation"

Larry Evans

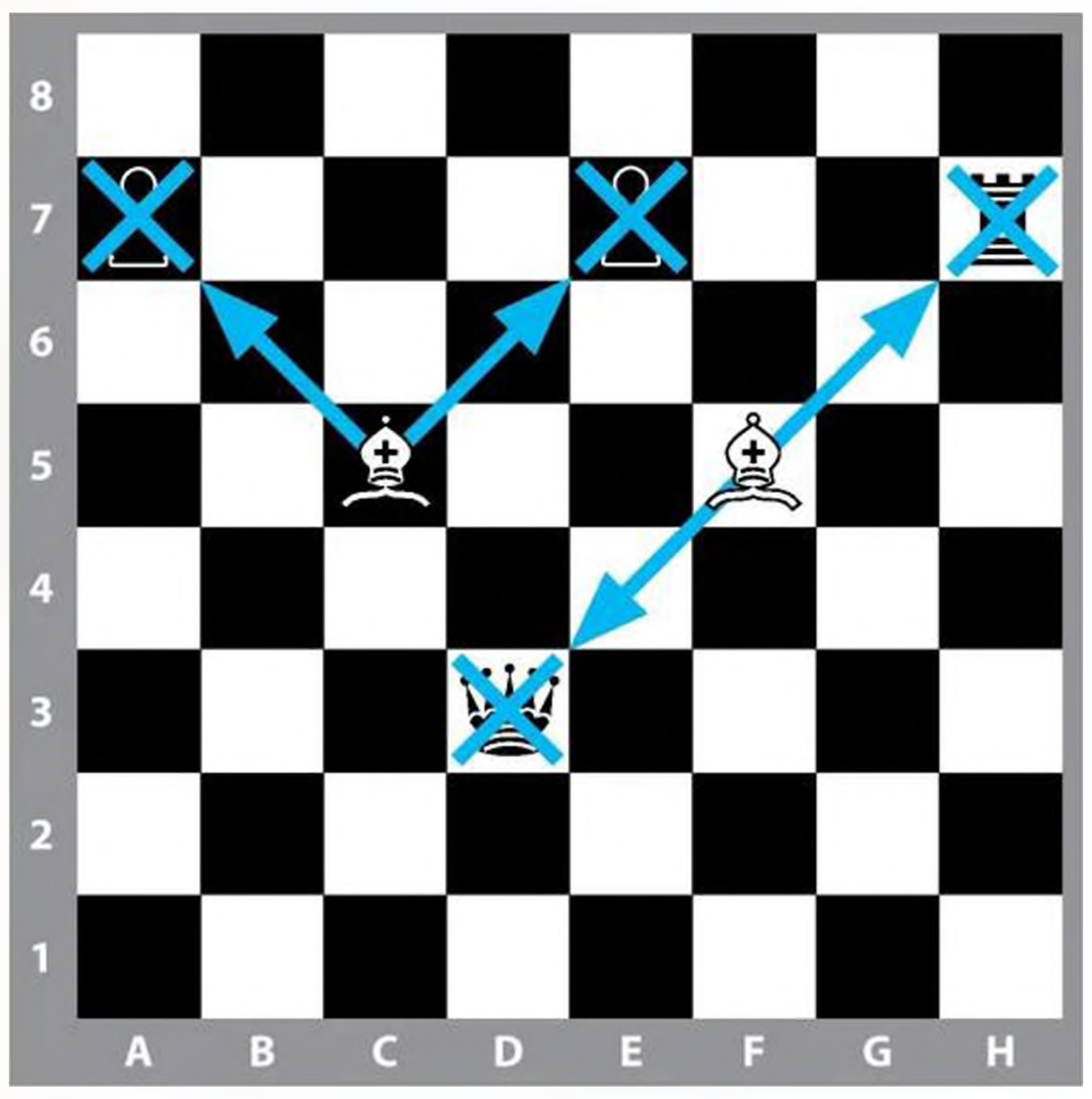
The bishop's movements





On the chessboard

Each player starts with two bishops on the board, which sit either side of the king and queen. One sits on a black square, and the other on a white square.



Capture by bishop

Bishops can only move diagonally along the square colour on which they started. They can capture pieces in their path, and replace them on that square.

GOOD BISHOPS AND BAD BISHOPS

Learn how to make your bishops work for you

Bishops can be used alongside other pieces to get the best out of them. A bishop that is working well with pawns is called a 'good bishop'. For example, if the bishop is occupying a white square and most of the pawns are occupying the black squares, this is advantageous as the bishop has more freedom to move and can control the squares that its allied pawns can't. A 'bad bishop' generally occupies the same colour squares as the surrounding pawns, which can trap it. Although this is not seen as ideal, there are advantages, as the bishop and the pawns may defend one another.

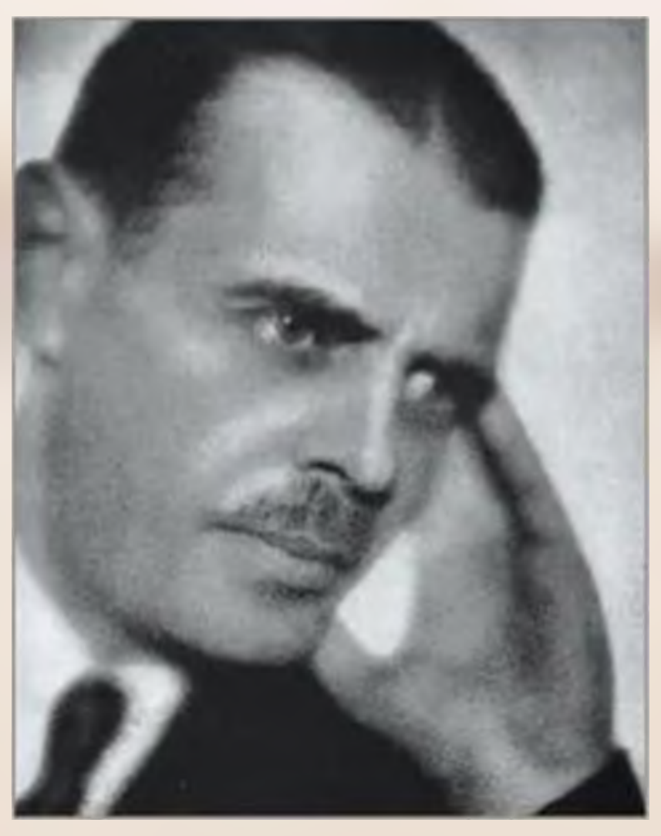
The knight

Charge into battle using this chess piece and learn how to use its nifty movements to guide you to victory

Knights are some of the more tricky characters to master on the chessboard. Often depicted as figures of horses or horses' heads, they are the only pieces that can jump over other pieces (friendly or opposing) and their movement is also less straightforward than the other pieces.

With a value of 3 points, equalling the worth of a bishop, knights are often thought of as less valuable pieces, but their value all depends on how you play them. Knights can move in an L-shaped pattern, by either moving one square to the side and then two squares up or down, or two squares to the side and then one square up or down. They can move in any direction, as long as they follow this L-shaped rule and as long as their 'landing' square is free. If the 'landing' square is occupied by a friendly chess piece, the knight may not move to that square, but if it's occupied by an opponent's chess piece, the knight may capture it, if it so wishes, and replace that piece on the square. This L-shaped pattern means that knights always land on a square of a different colour to the one on which they started, so if a knight started its L-shaped move on a white square, it will always land on a black square and vice versa.

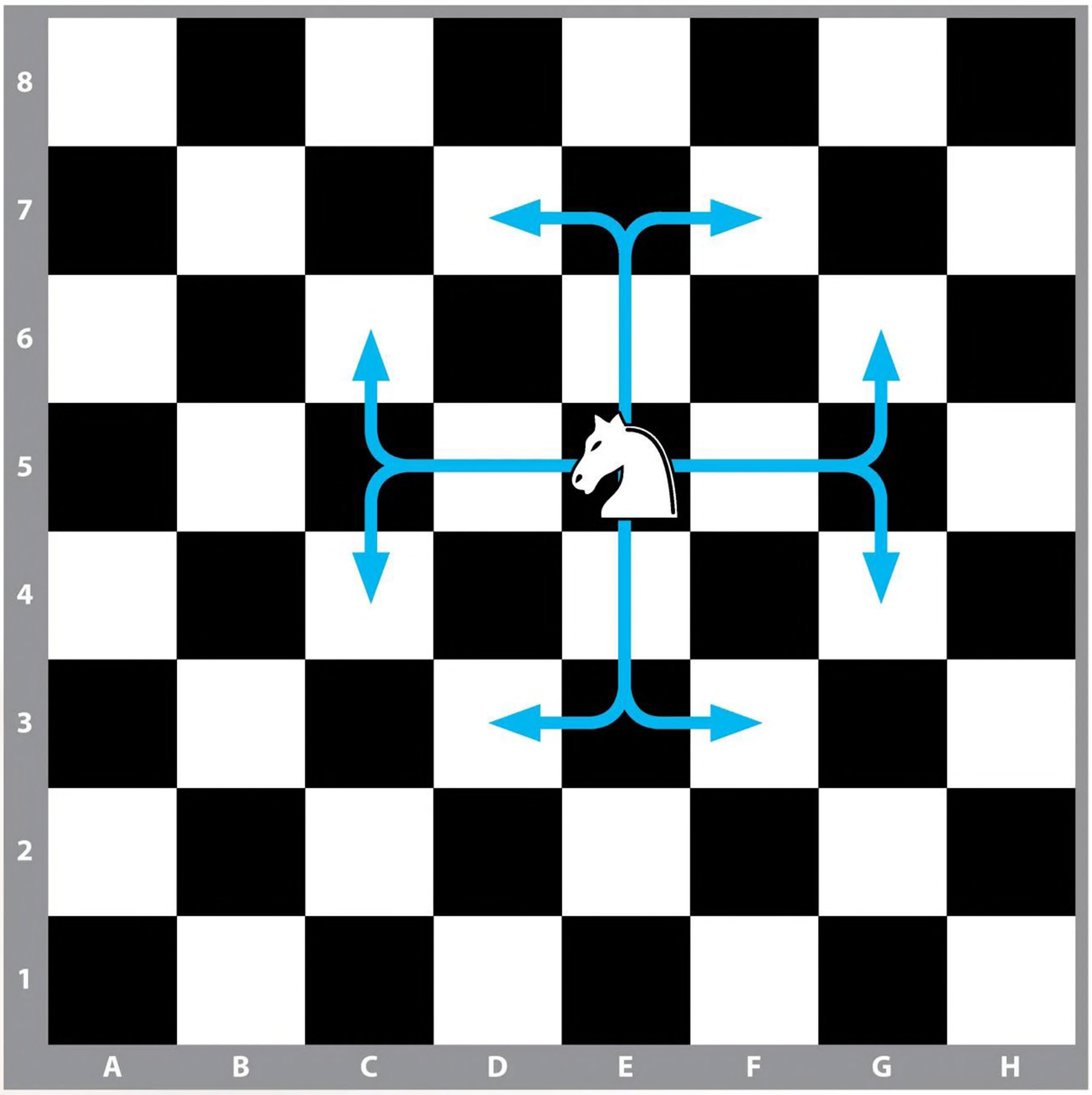
Unlike rooks or bishops, knights come into their own when used in areas of the board that are densely packed with chess pieces. They are also the only piece on the board that can move at the beginning of the game without first moving a pawn out of the way.

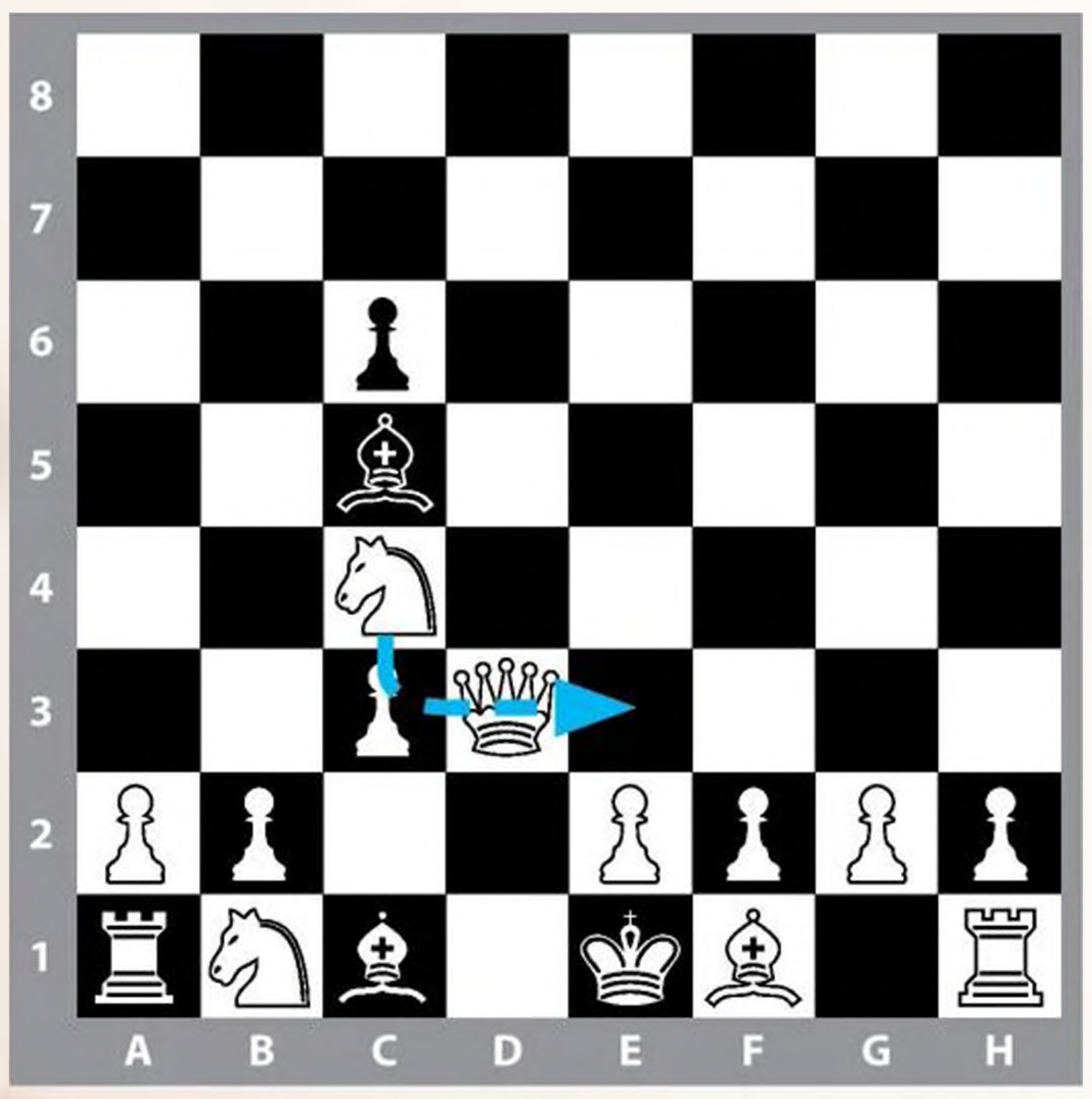


"It has remarkable characteristics which compel respect and occasionally surprise the most wary players"

Eugene Znosko-Borovsky

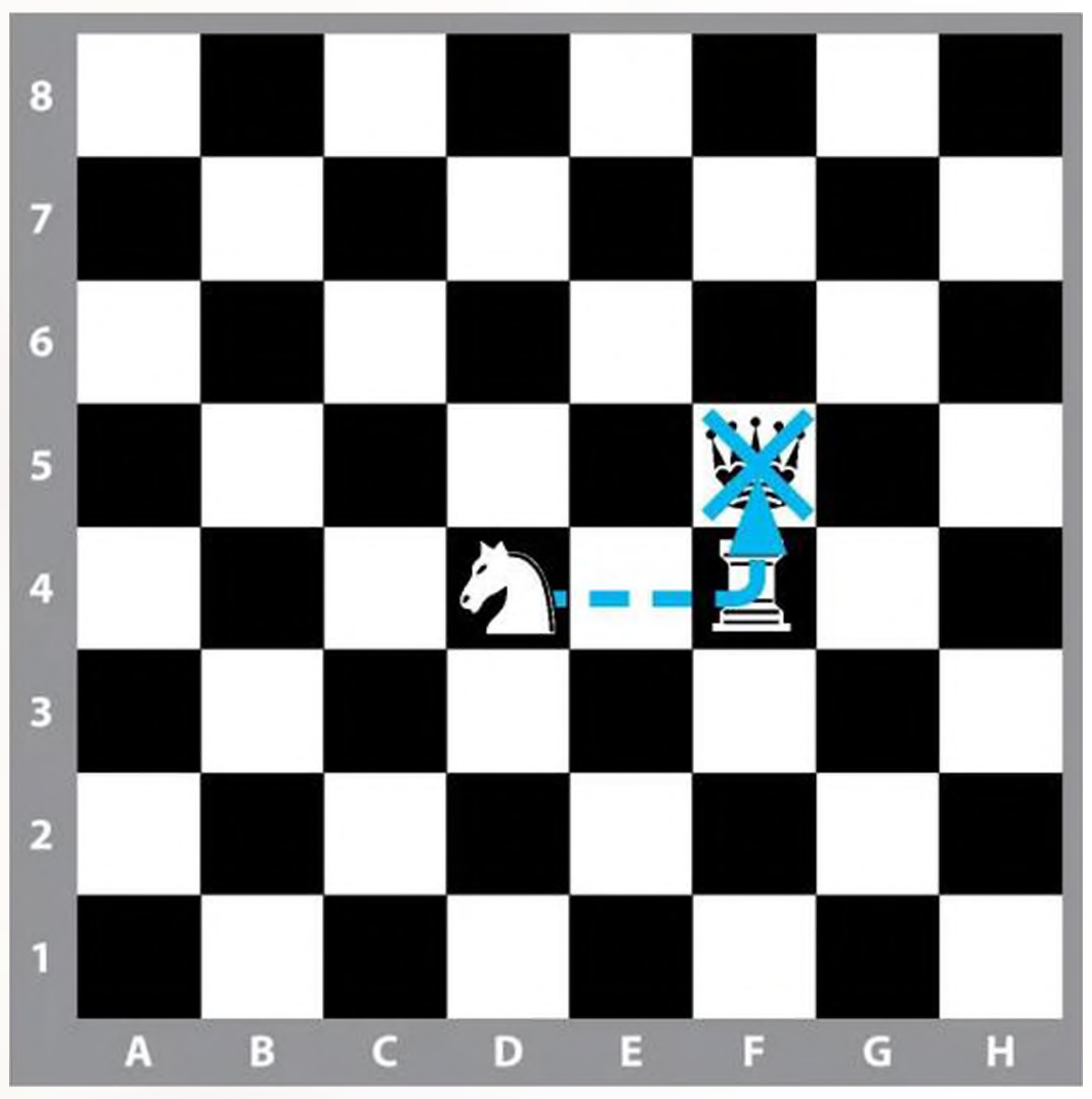
The knight's movements





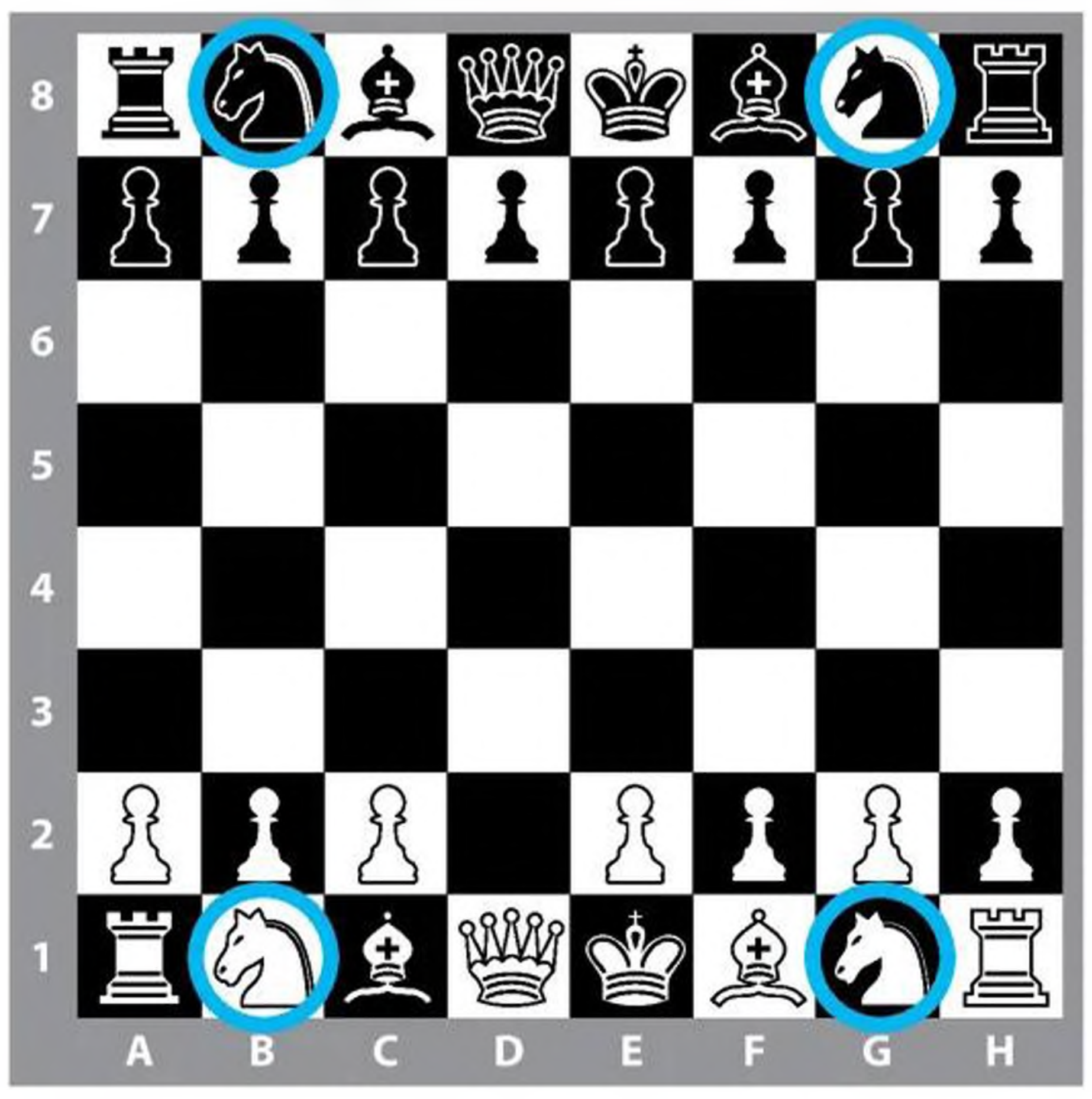
Jumping knights

Providing there is no friendly piece on their 'landing' square, knights are the only pieces in chess that can 'jump' over others to get to where they need to go.



How knights capture

Knights can only capture a piece that is on a square that they can 'land' on. They make the L-shaped jump and replace the opponent's piece after capture.



Placement on the board

Each opponent's two knights begin the game one square in from the corners of the board, sandwiched between the two rooks and the two bishops.

The pawn

Each opponent has eight of these little guys to play with, and there's more to them than meets the eye

Each player starts off with eight pawns, all lined up on the player's second rank in front of the other chess pieces. Each pawn has a value of 1 point. A pawn can only move one square forwards at any one time, except their very first move where a player has the option of moving a pawn two squares forwards. They cannot move backwards or sideways, nor can they jump over other pieces, and if their path is blocked by another piece – friendly or opposing – they cannot move.

Another interesting thing about pawns is how they capture, since they are the only chess pieces that capture differently to how they move. Pawns can take their opponent's pieces on a diagonal, going forwards. They then replace that piece on the square where it stood.

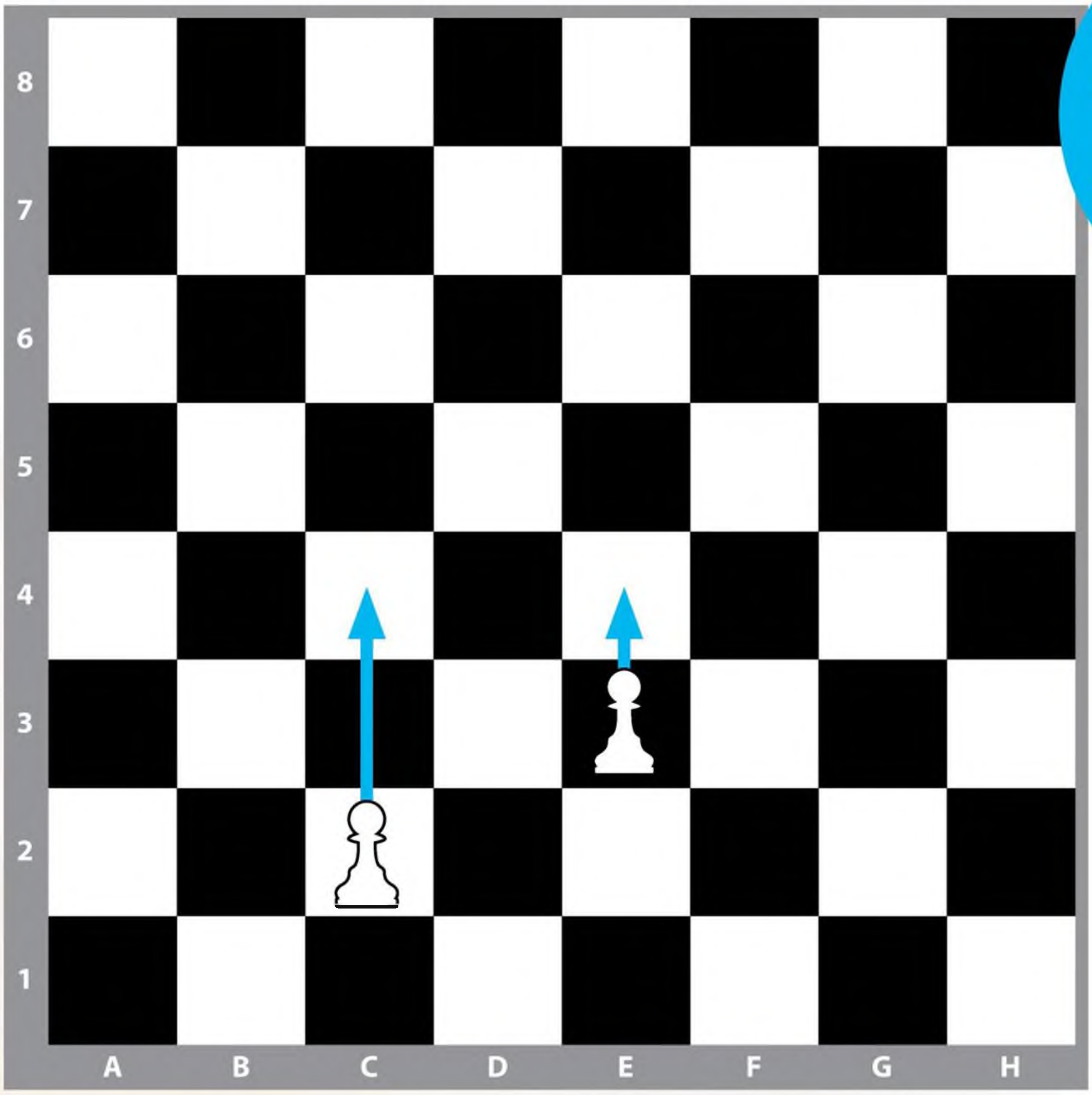
Pawns have one trick associated with capturing that is known as 'en passant'. This is where, for example, a black pawn has just made his first move of two squares, next to him is a white pawn. The white pawn can capture the black one diagonally, even though the black pawn isn't on the diagonal square, but directly next to the white pawn. This can only happen immediately after the black pawn moves. See step 3 for a diagram of this rule.

Pawns are, in fact, all potential queens. If a pawn makes it to the furthest rank from where they started, pawns can be promoted. They can become any type of chess piece apart from a king. Because the queen is so powerful, many pawns are promoted to this piece. In fact, if a pawn is promoted to anything other than a queen, this is known as 'underpromotion'.

"Pawns not only create the sketch for the whole painting, they are also the soil, the foundation, of any position"

Anatoly Karpov

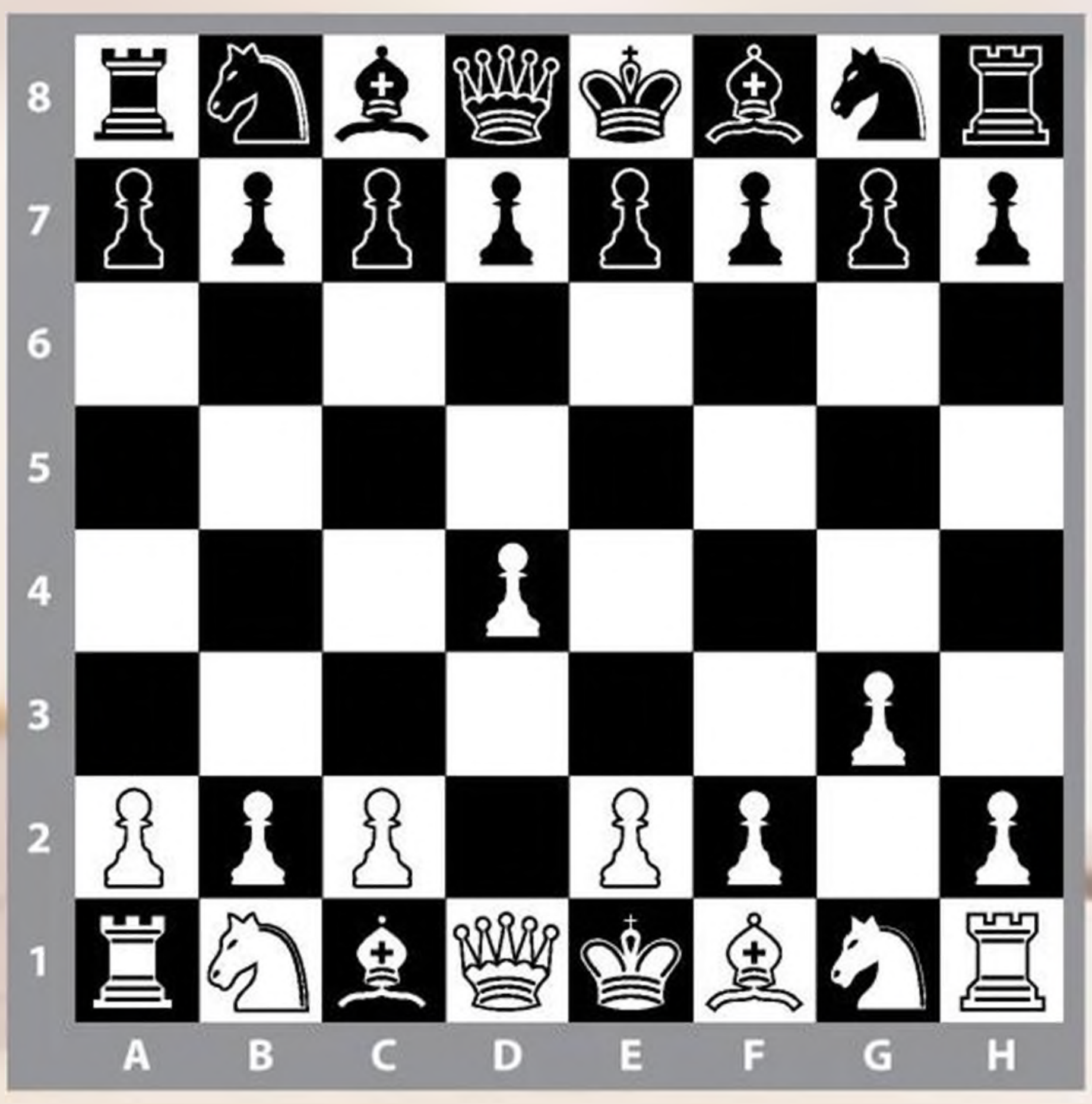
The pawn's movements



Top tip

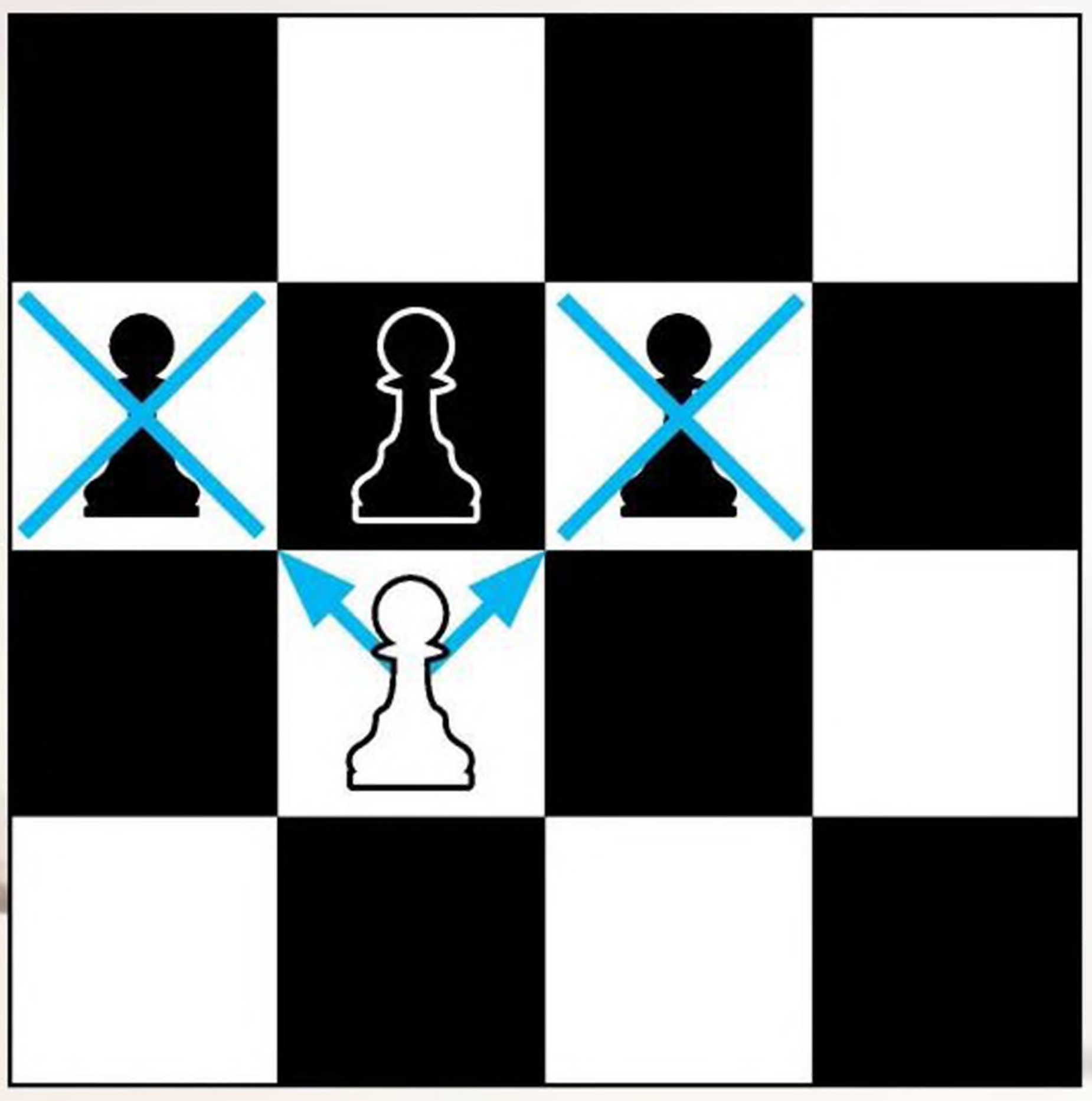
Pawn promotion

Pawns may be the weakest piece on the board, but if they reach the other side they can then be traded in for a more powerful piece. This is known as pawn promotion. You can find out more on page 84.



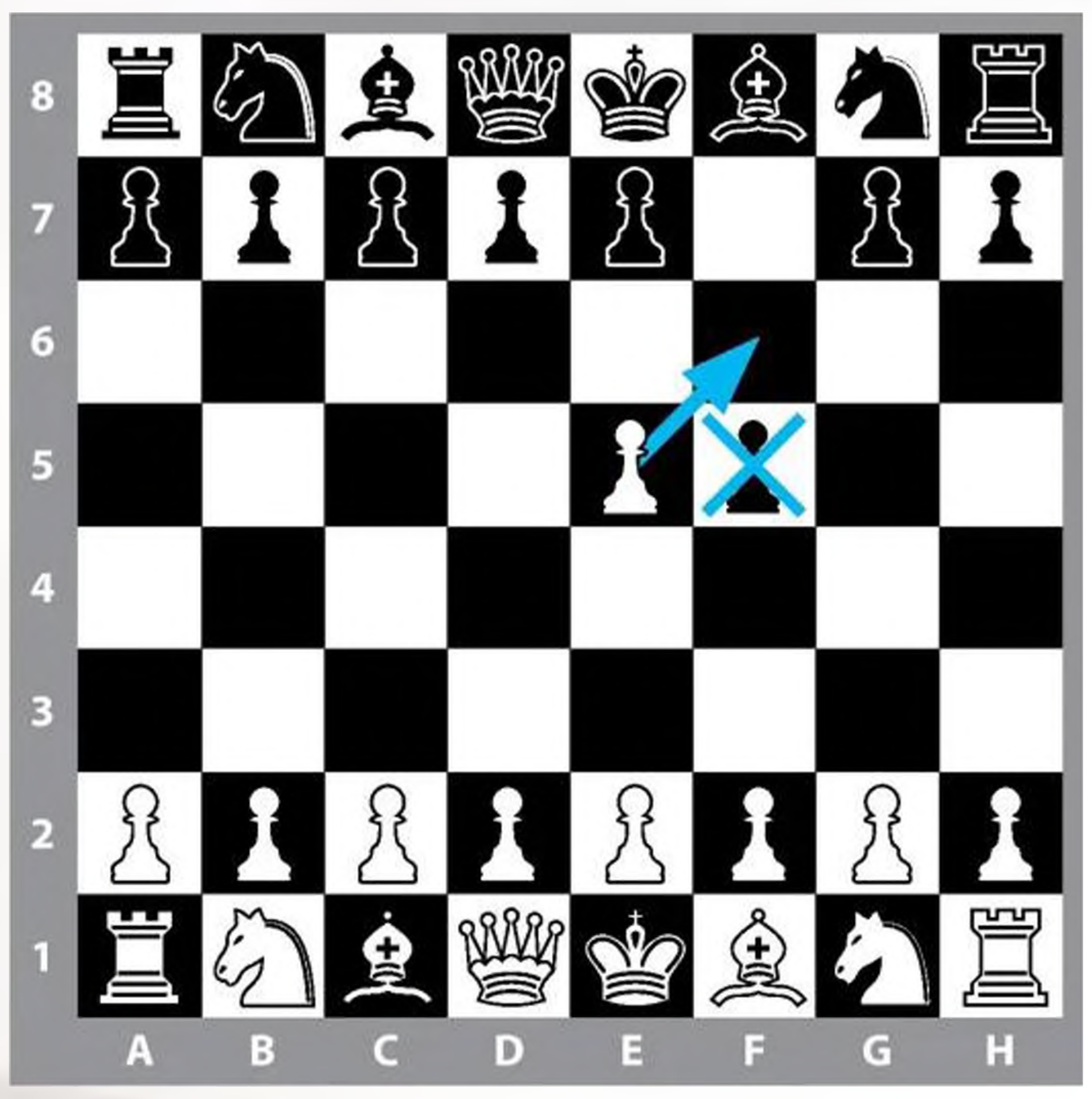
Pawns on the board

Each player has eight pawns lined up on the second rank. Pawns can move one or two squares on the first go, but can only move one square forward thereafter.



Pawn captures

Pawns can capture opposing pieces that are diagonally above them, to the left or right. They can't move or capture a piece that is directly in front of them.



'En passant' move

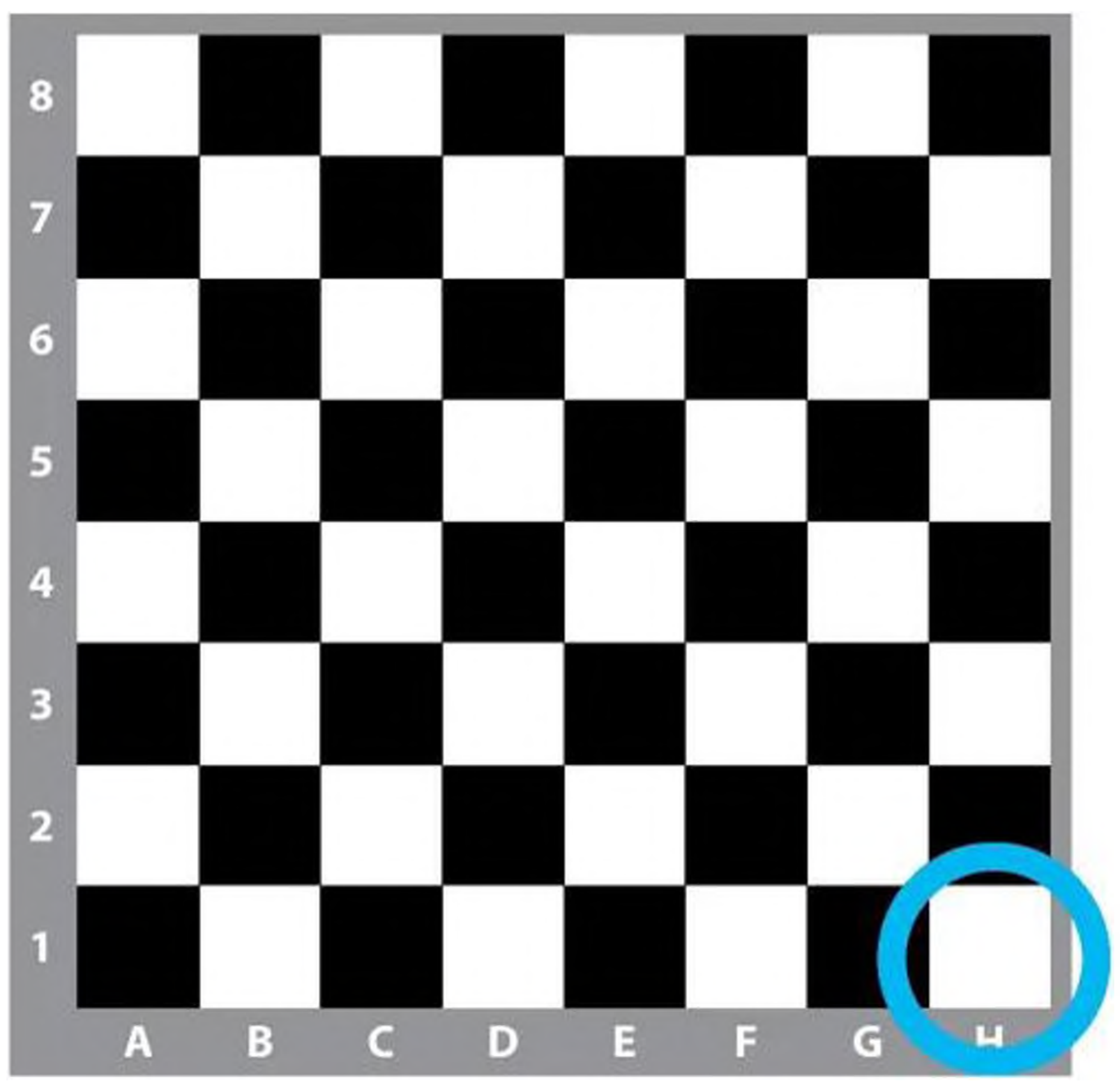
Pawns can capture a pawn that has just moved forward two squares, by moving to the square the captured pawn would have been on if it had only moved one.

10 things to remember

A top ten list of key tips to consider when you're learning the ropes of chess

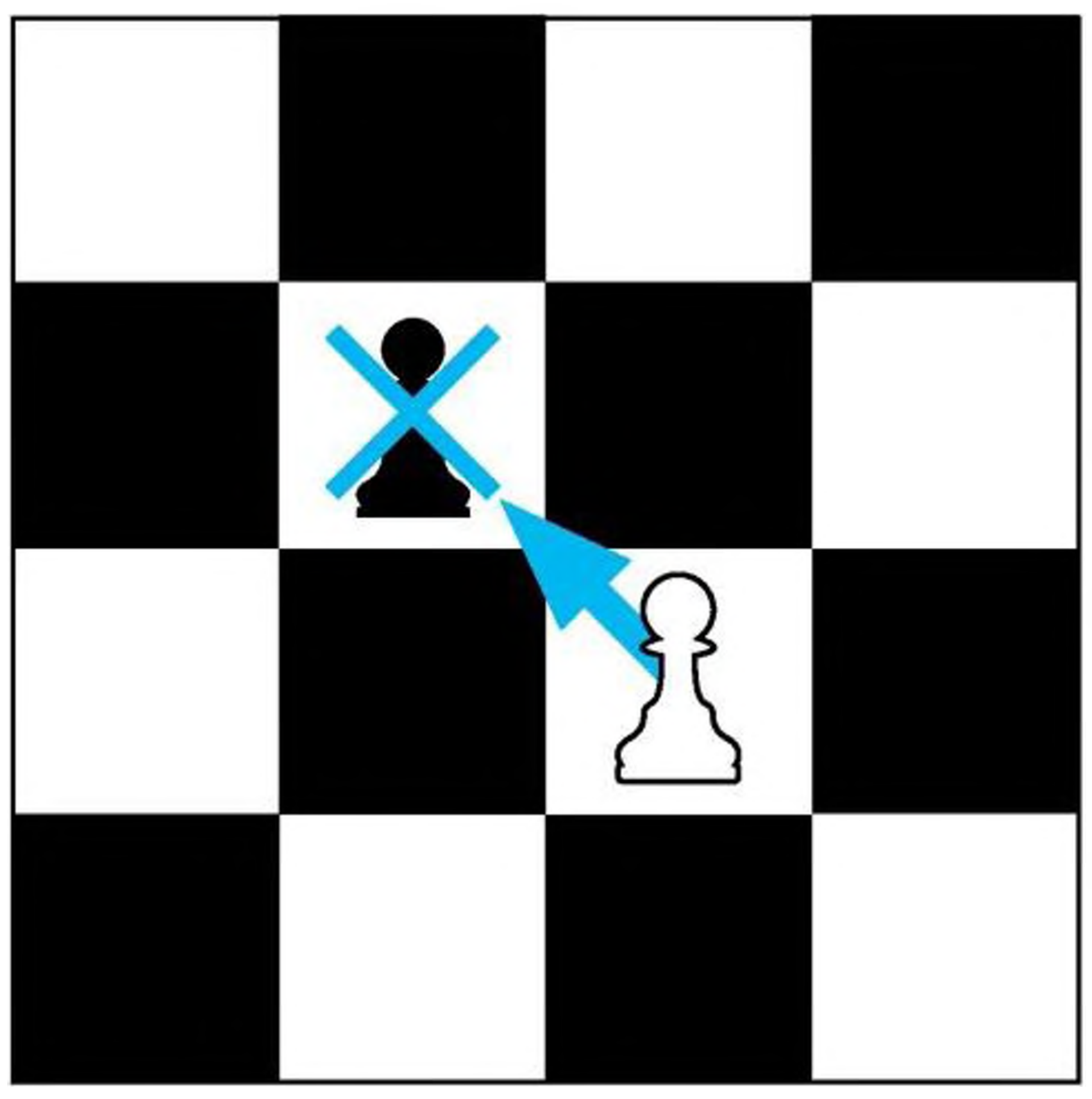
1 White on the right

In order to make sure you've got the chessboard the right way around and that all the pieces start on the correct square, remember that the white player must have a white square in the bottom-right corner of their board.



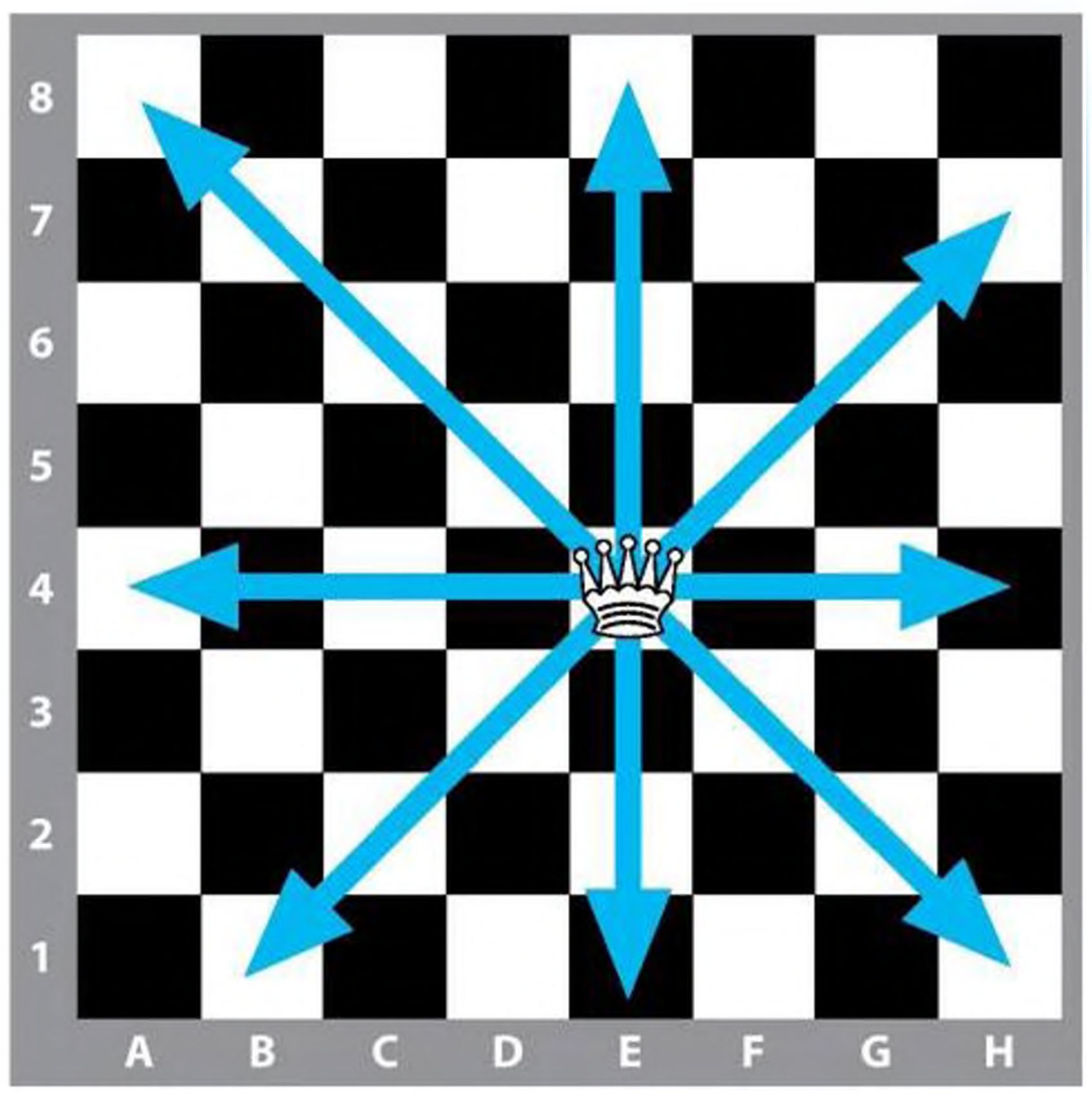
2 Check and checkmate

Check is when the king is in danger, but can be rescued by moving or by another piece. Checkmate is where the king is in irreparable danger, and ends the game. Stalemate is usually a draw, when no pieces can make legal moves.



3 Pawns capture diagonally

Unlike any of other piece type, pawns capture other pieces in a different way to how they move: diagonally in a forward motion. The pawn can then replace the captured piece on the square and resume normal forward movement.



4 Queen can go where it pleases

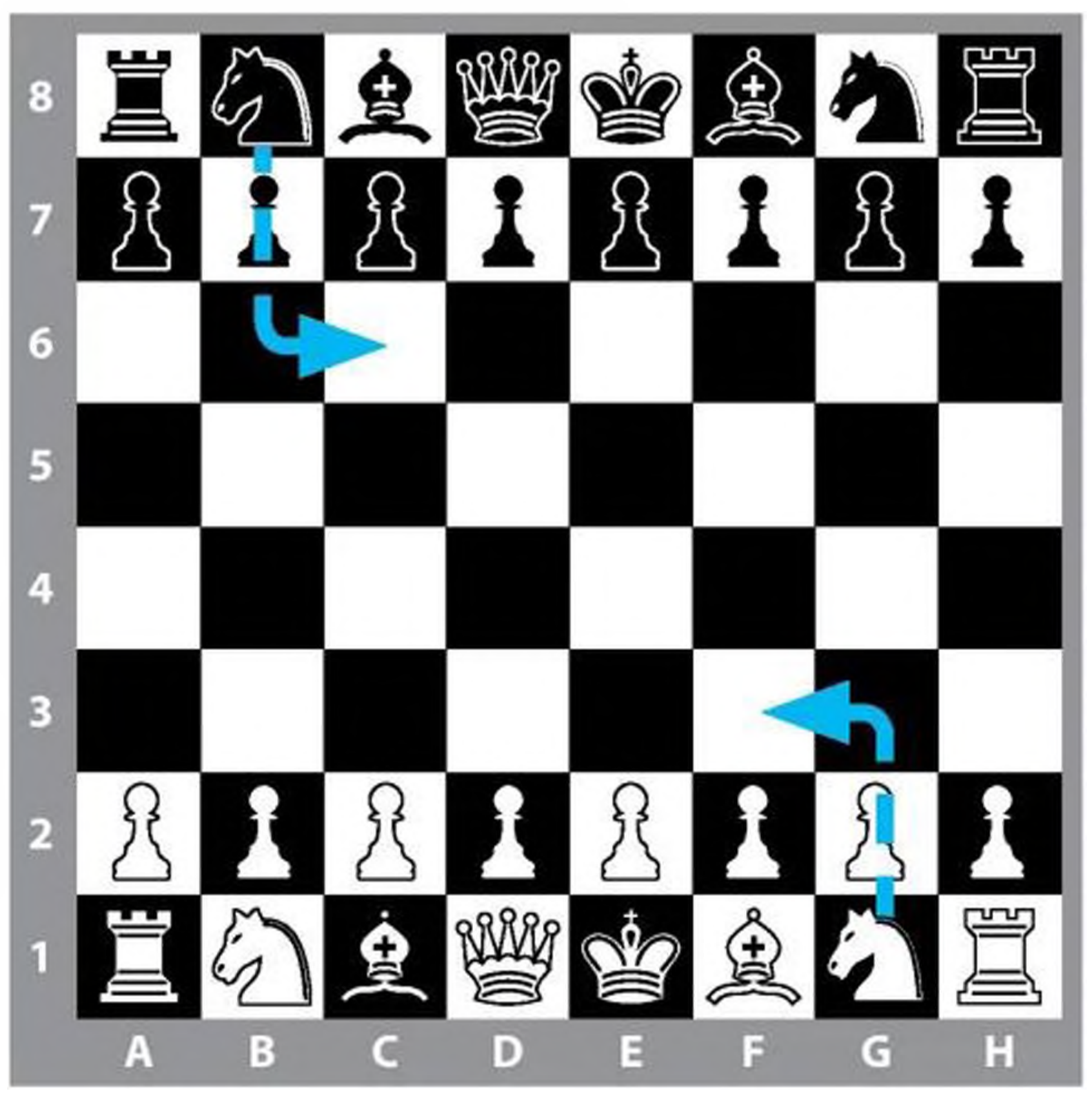
Remember that your queen is the most powerful piece on the board! It can move anywhere in a forward, backward, side-to-side or diagonal motion. However, the queen can't jump over things, and it can't turn corners.

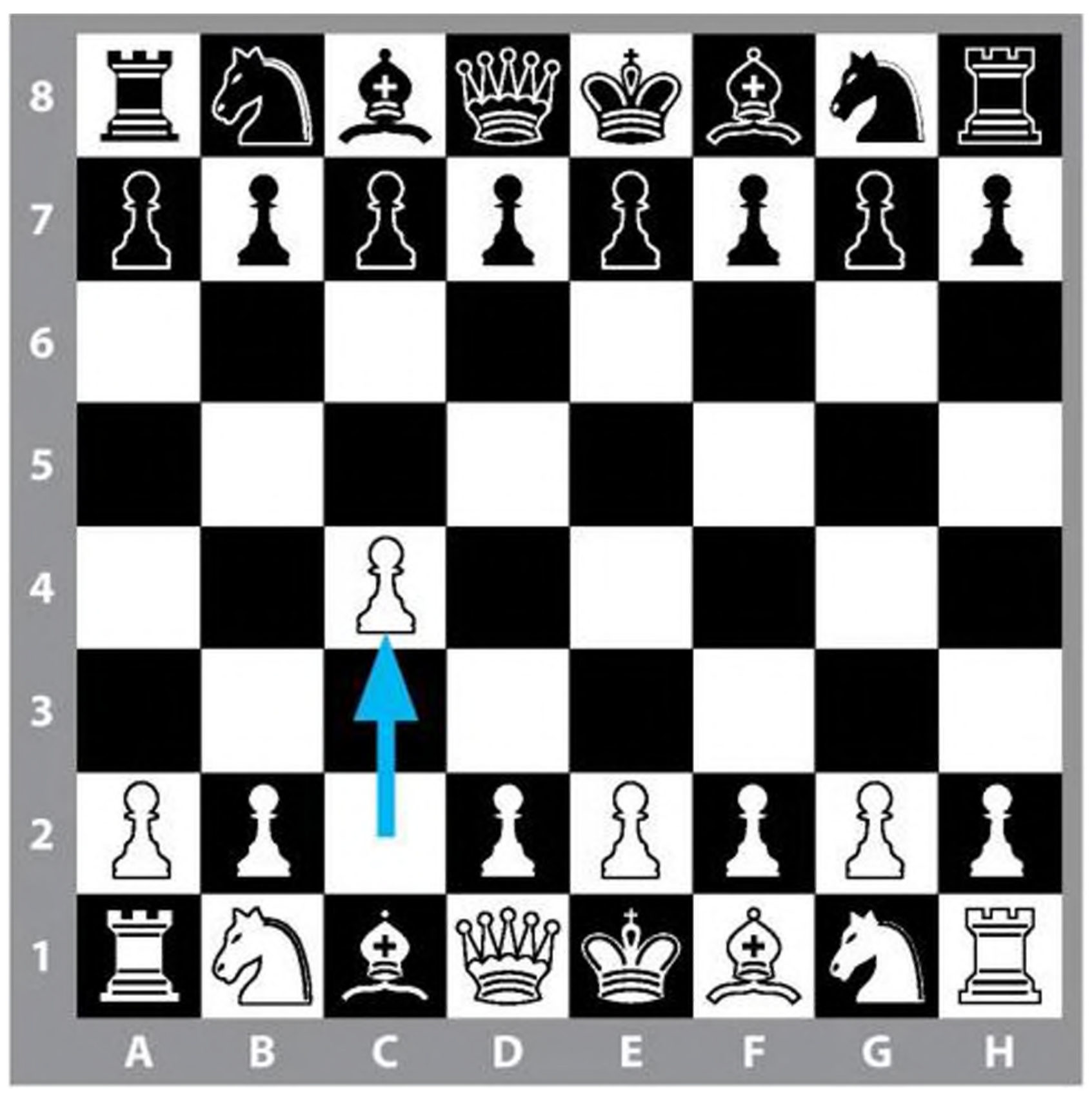
5 Keep the king safe

The king is able to move one square in any direction, but it can never be placed in danger. So it's considered illegal to move your king onto a square that is under threat from another chess piece and so put itself into check.

6 Knights are jumpers

Knights in chess have the unique capability to jump over other chess pieces. Knights move in an L-shape, and as long as there is no friendly piece on their 'landing' square, they can jump over as many as they like.





7 White goes first

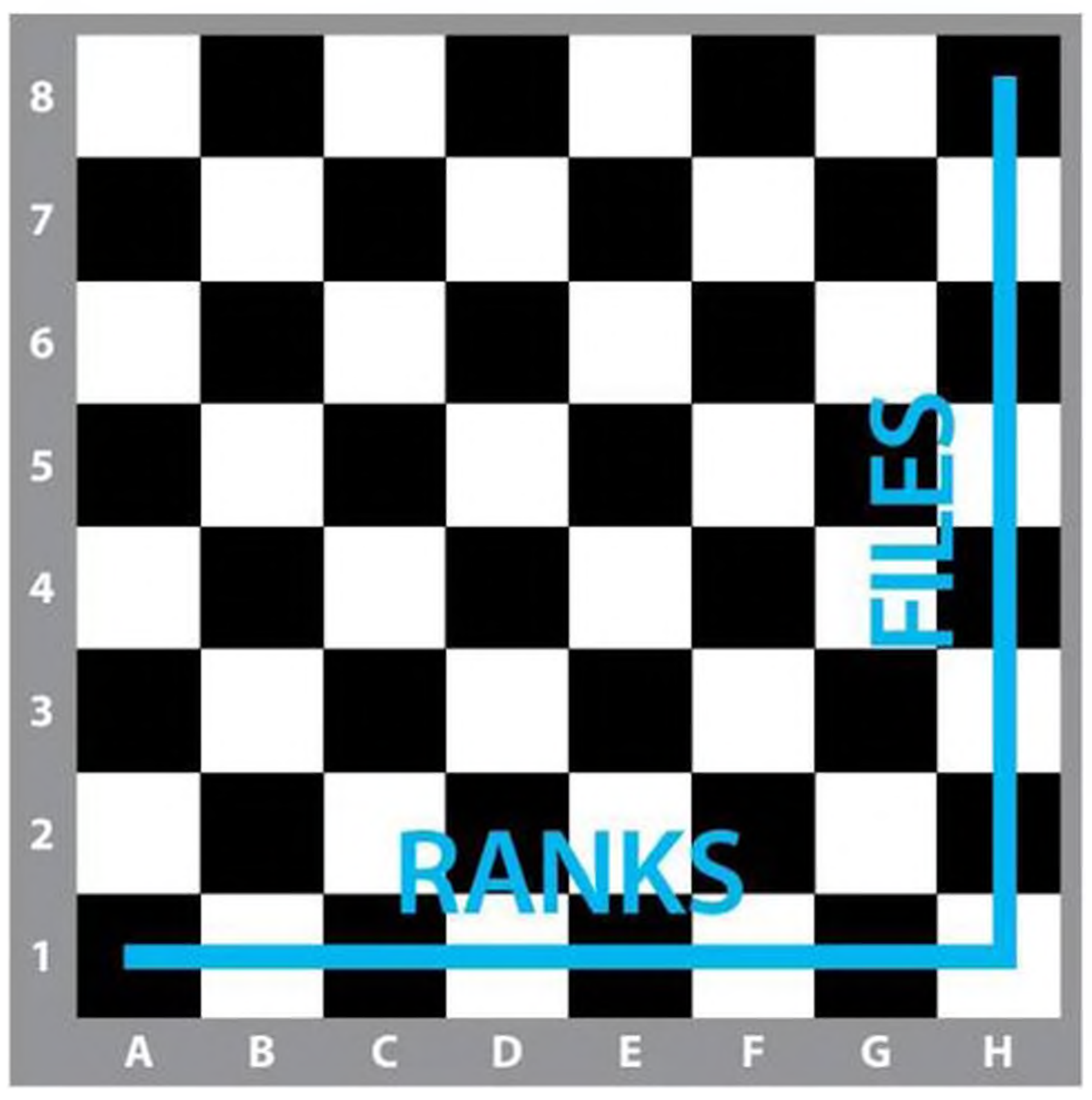
To save any kind of flapping about by tossing a coin or drawing straws to decide who begins the game, the rules of chess has a plain and simple answer. The player with the white chess pieces always takes the first move.

8 Aim of the game

The objective of chess is to strategically work your chess pieces across the board with a view to capturing the enemy king. If either side manages to checkmate their opponent, that player wins and the game is over.

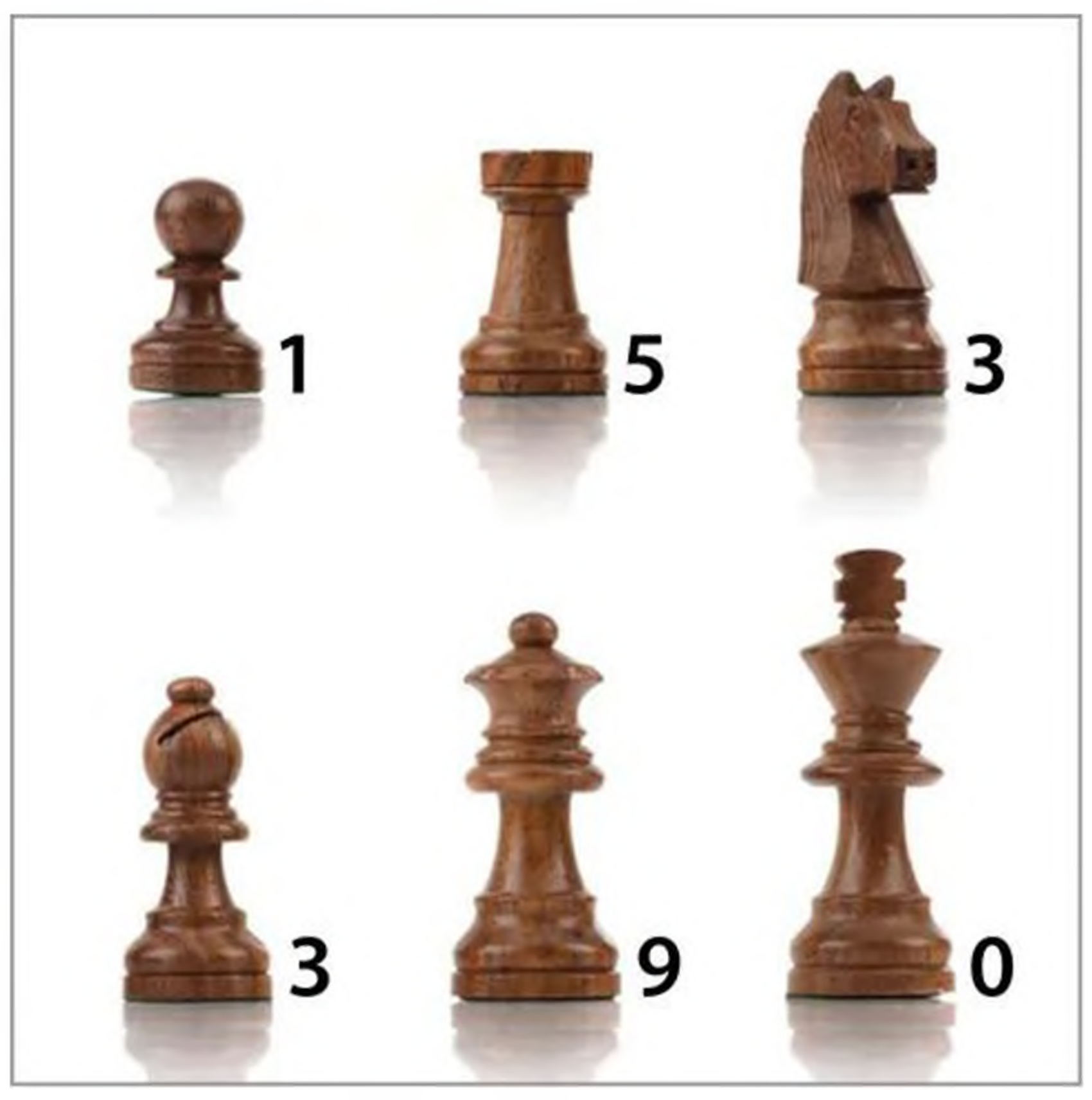
9 Files and ranks

The board is divided up into files (vertical columns of squares) and ranks (horizontal rows). These are numbered and lettered, beginning from the bottom-left corner, so each square has a unique location.



10 Value of the pieces

Each piece has a relative value, so you can weigh up whether they are worth trading for your opponent's pieces. The queen has the highest value of 9, knights and bishops 3, rooks 5, pawns 1 and the king 0.



Understanding chess notation

Learn how to get your greatest moves down in words and even notate a whole game of chess with this simple system

First of all, don't be scared by the name: algebraic notation is a very simple and easy-to-understand method of writing chess moves down. It's used for documenting games in tournaments and is the best way of describing how to play chess in books, magazines and online and is the method recognised by the World Chess Federation (FIDE). As chess is a physical game, it's useful to be able to write down the moves made by each player in shorthand, instead of having to write 'white queen moves to the third square from the left on the second row and captures a black pawn'.

This method of documentation uses lower-case letters and numbers to denote the individual squares on a chessboard, so each location on the board is easy to pinpoint. Capital letters are used to denote the chess pieces, while other symbols such as an 'x' or a '+' or a '#' stand for moves such as captures and check or checkmate.

The notation is written in two columns, one for white and one for black. In a tournament, each player must note down his or her move. The moves are numbered for each player, so it's easy to see how to game progresses by looking through the notations in order. It might look a little bit confusing at first, but once you get the hang of what letters relate to what pieces, and how each square on the chessboard is identified, you'll soon pick it up.

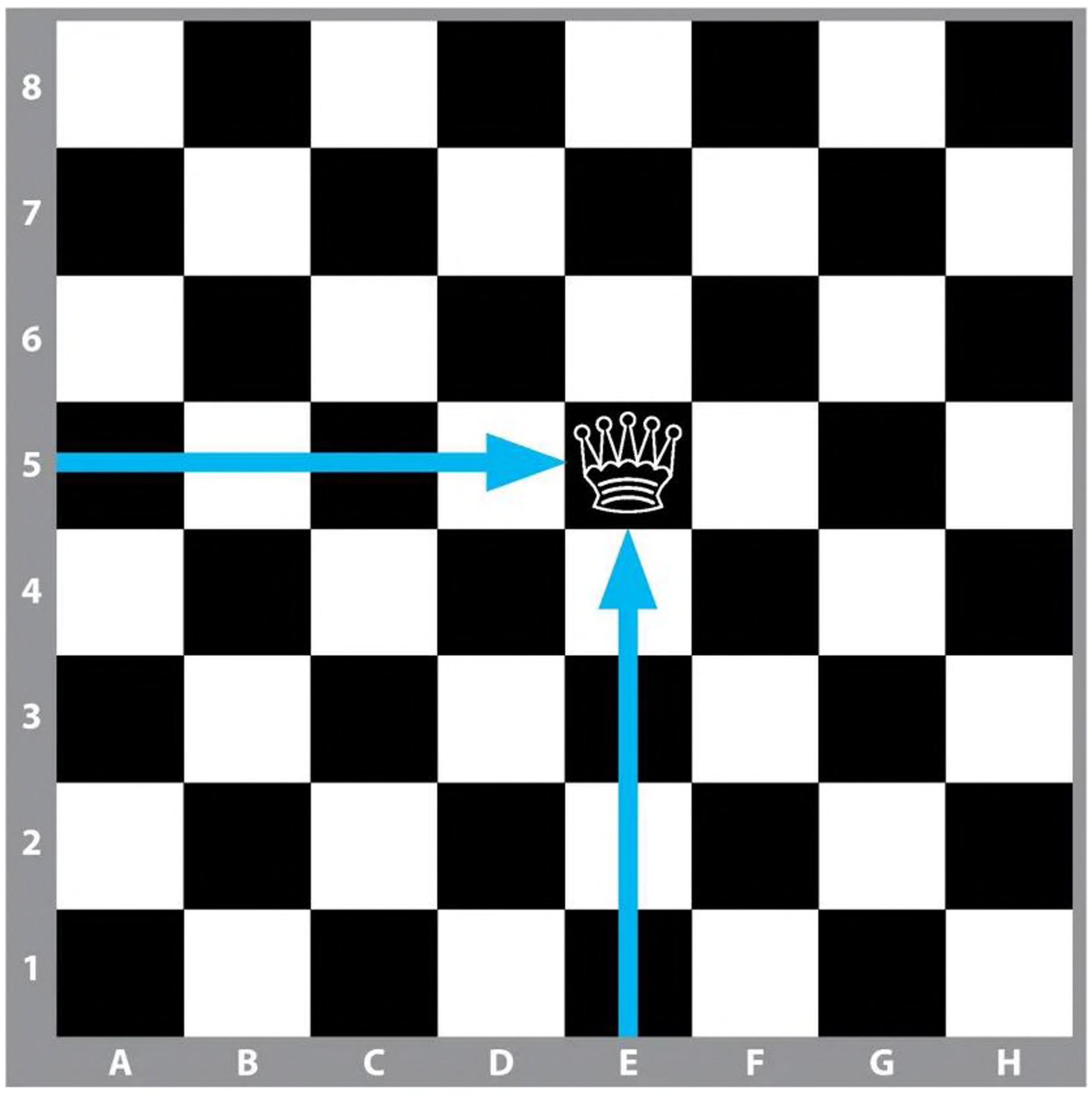
Here we'll show you what each symbol means, how a game is put together using algebraic notation and how to read it and apply the moves to a chessboard. Before you know it you'll be able to note down all your killer moves on your way to becoming a true Grandmaster!

Top tip

Know your pawns

Unlike the other pieces, pawns aren't denoted by a capital letter. When you see d2-d4 instead of Qd2-d4, for instance, you know that the absence of a capital letter means a pawn makes this move.

> "Before you know it you'll be able to note down all your killer moves"



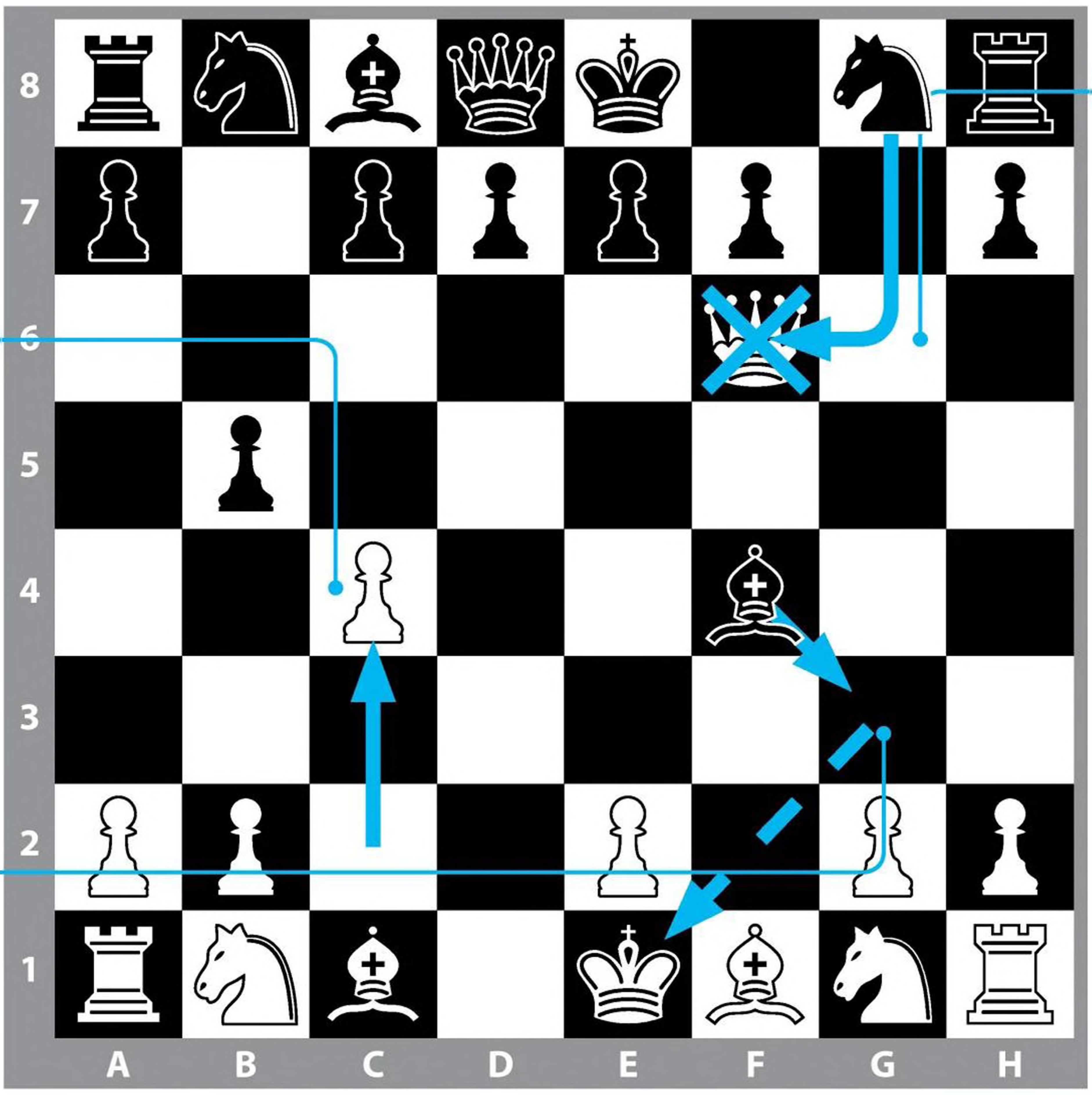
01: Places on the board Ranks are labelled 1-8 and files a-h. Quite like the grid on a map, using these gives each square a unique code. The queen here is at e5.

K	King	**Q**	Queen
R	Rook	**B**	Bishop
N	Knight	**x**	Capture
+	Check	**++ or #**	Checkmate
o-o	Castles king's side	**o-o-o**	Castles queen's side
=	Promotion	**e.p.**	en passant

02: Notation symbols This is a list of symbols that are used in algebraic notation. Capital letters for chess pieces, 'x' for capture and '+' for check, '++' or '#' for checkmate.

Notation in practice

See how a few moves on the board translate into notation



c2-c4
No capital letters before the notation tells us a pawn is moving. Here it moves two spaces as its first move in the game

Bf4-g3+
The B is for bishop, which moves from square f4 to g3. When it gets to g3, it puts the white king in check, signified by the '+' symbol

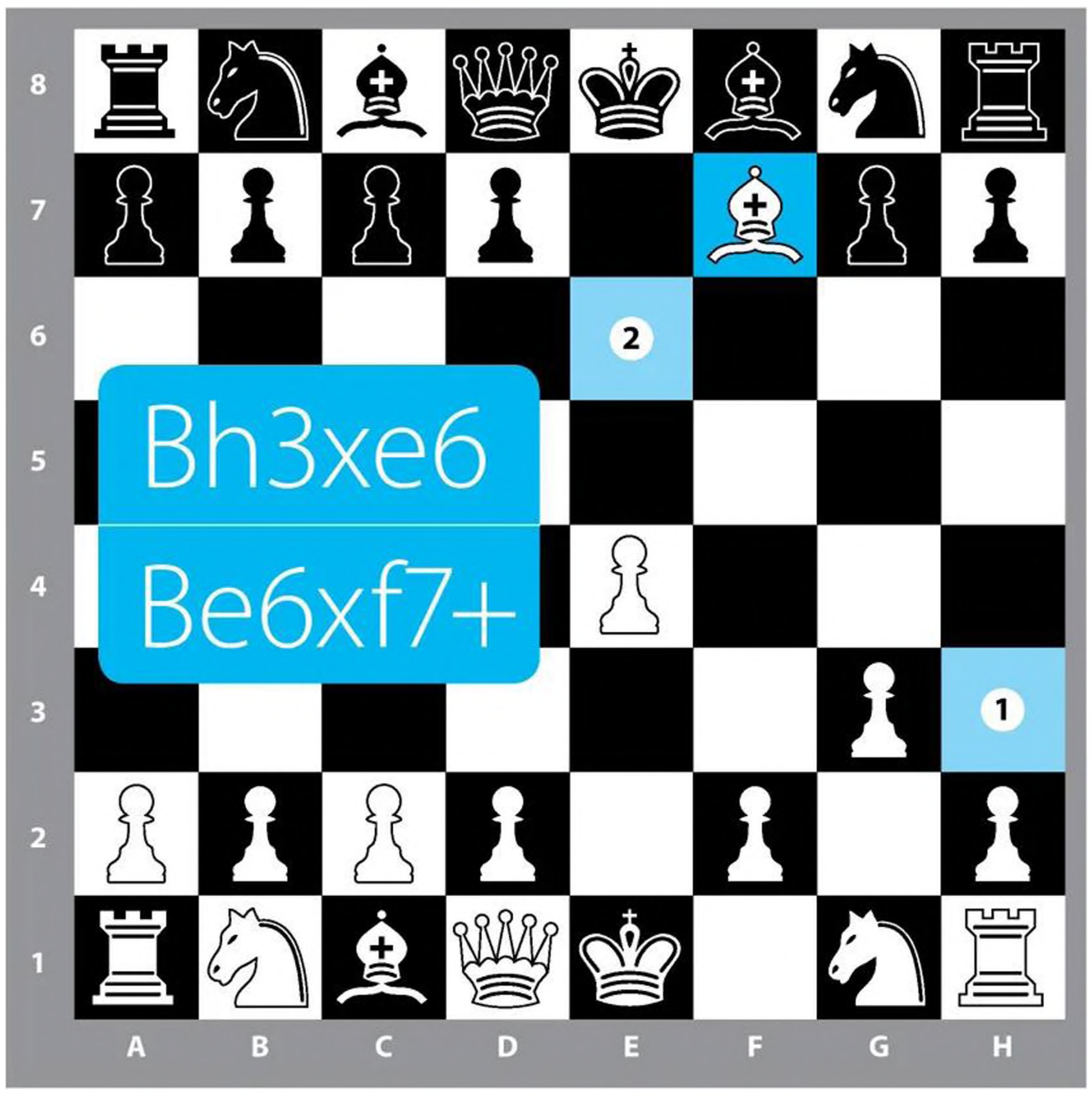
Ng8xf6
The black knight (denoted by an N) on g8 moves to f6 and in doing so, it captures the white queen on that square, signified by the 'x'

WRITE JUST WHITE, OR BLACK

If you want to show a black move (handy when you're jotting down things, not a whole game where white and black moves are clear), add '…' in front of the notation; such as '… Ra7xc7'. Without this it's assumed the move is white.

	White	Black
1.	d2-d4	f7-f5
2.	g2-g3	d7-d6
3.	Bf1-h3	Nb8-c6
4.	Bh3xf5	Nc6xd4
5.	b2-b4	Qd8-d7
6.	Qd1-d3	Qd7xf5

03: Two-columned notes Games are noted in two columns, one for white and one for black. The moves are numbered, so every one can be noted properly in turn.



04: Check and capture Above, a bishop moves from h3$^{(1)}$ and captures (x) a piece on e6. It then moves from e6$^{(2)}$, captures (x) the piece on f7 and puts the king in check (+).

Playing the game

Learn how to play the game of chess, from the best openings, to how to capture pieces, and how to use forks, pins and skewers in your game

40 **Openings** Make the all important first move

48 **Capturing pieces** Start taking your opponents pieces

52 **Check and checkmate** Learn about winning the game

58 **Gambits** Throw your opponent off with risky play

60 **Sacrifices** Take a gamble by sacrificing your pieces

64 **Pawn structures** Be aware of its' strengths and weaknesses

66 **Fianchetto** Move your bishop out early on

68 **Castling** Add extra protection to your king

70 **Forks** Get to grips with this effective attack

72 **Pins** Trap your opponents pieces

76 **Skewers** Learn how to play and avoid this move

78 **Batteries** Turn a game around quickly

80 **Decoys** Trick you opponent with decoy pieces

82 **Traps** Create traps with your pieces

84 **Pawn promotion** Get your pawn across the board!

86 **Zugzwang** For those moments you have to move

88 **Draws** How to decide on a draw situation

92 **Beginner tactics** Have some quick tips for playing tactics

100 **The final move matters** Follow this example game

"'Check' refers to a point in the game when the king is under threat from an opposing piece"

Openings

The way you start your chess game is hugely important. Take time to learn some opening patterns to improve your gameplay

Top tip

Knights first

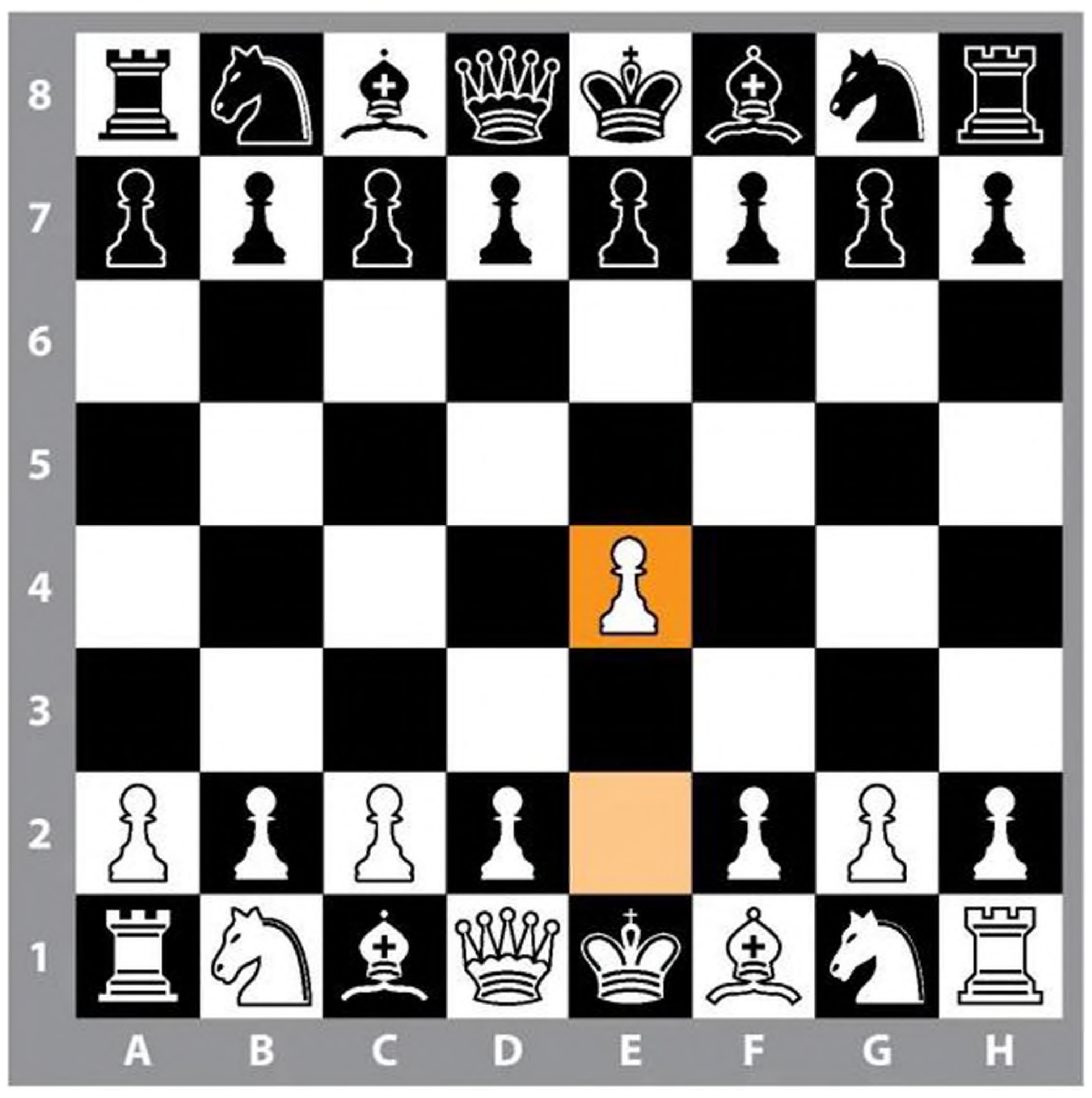
Some players suggest developing knights first as they are more effective if in the centre of the board. While getting them into position, your opponent's responses may suggest where to place future pieces.

The initial moves between the two players in a chess game are known as the opening. Within just the first few moves of a game, the number of available moves and positions are immeasurable. Over the years, many combinations of opening moves have been studied in order to find the best way to open a match. There are hundreds of recognised opening variants that have their own names. Over time, some of these sequences have proved more popular and successful than others. The thing to bear in mind with chess is that each side is equally matched. It's not about who has the better team, it's about how you open the match and how your opponent responds to your moves. A game of chess consists of three stages: the opening, the middlegame and the endgame. Ultimately, a good opening can serve a number of purposes. It can get your pieces mobilised on useful squares (known as developing) so they can have an impact on the game. There is also the possibility of controlling the centre of the board – particularly squares e4, d4, e5 and d5 – which for some players is seen as a good way of limiting your opponent's mobility. A good opening can also determine how well protected your king will be from attack.

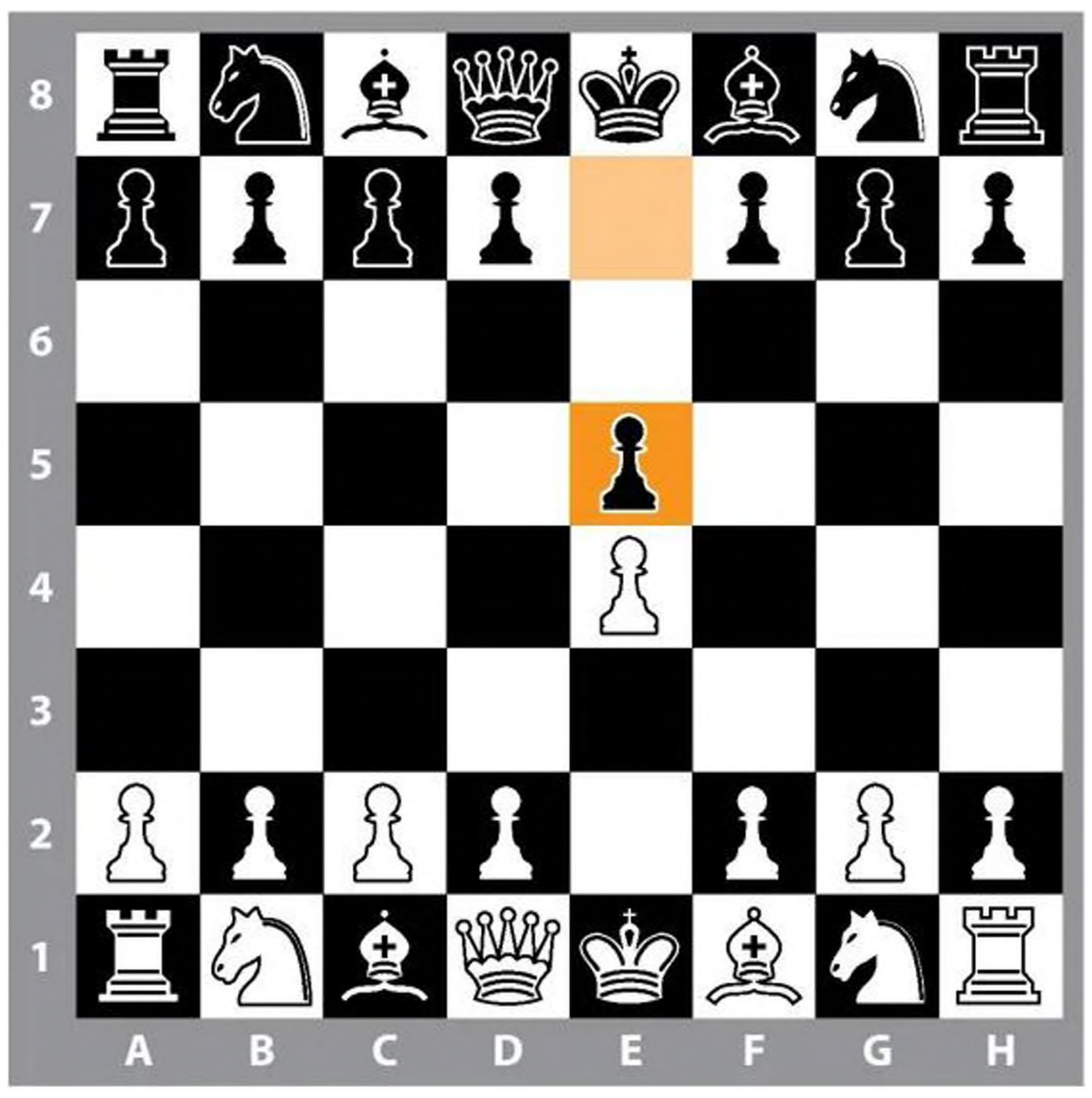
Common openings

Here we take a look at three of the most popular openings in chess, each of which will have a great influence on how the game develops

Open Game

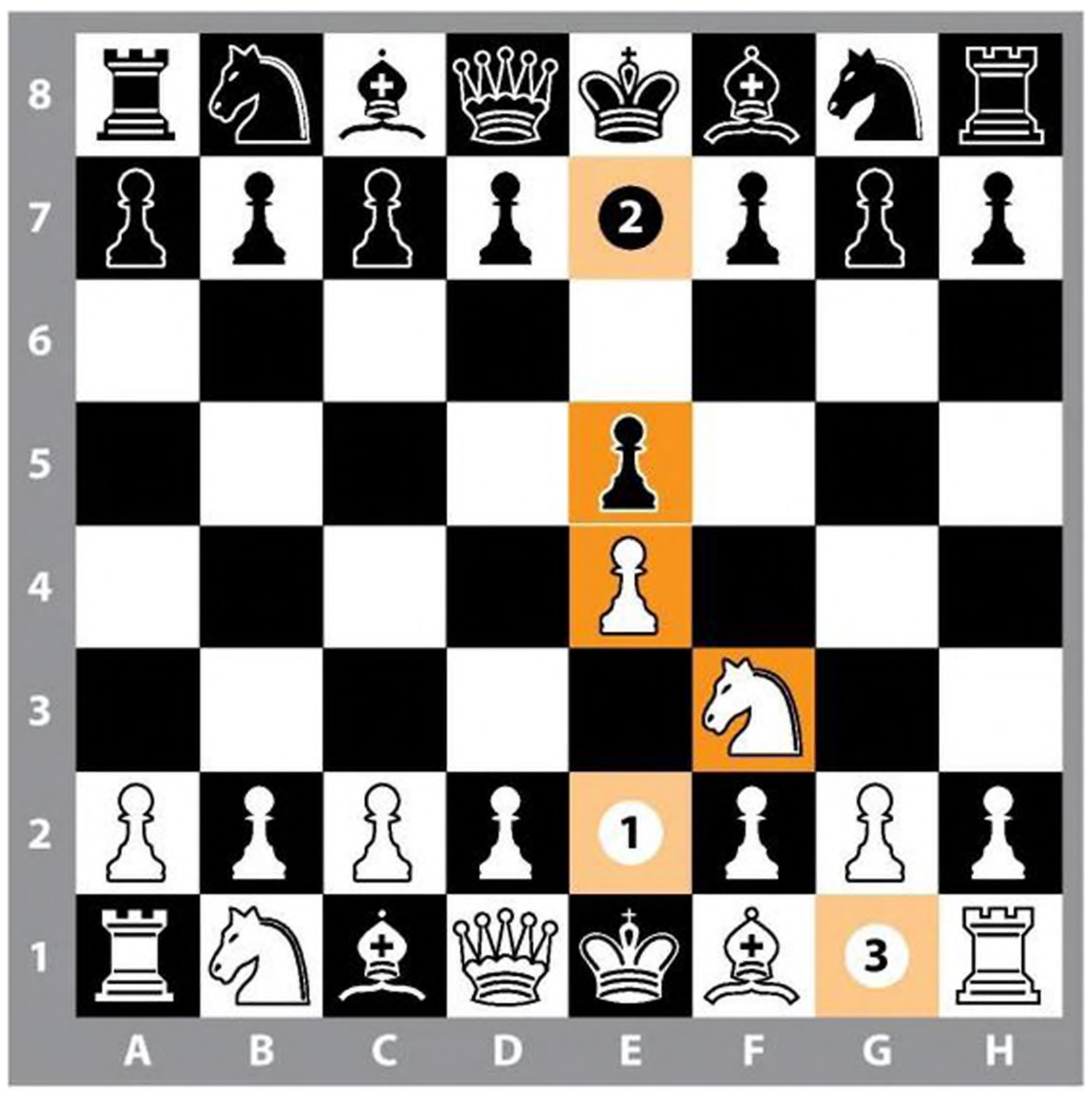


OFFENCE: An Open Game (or Double King's Pawn Opening) is a chess game where white starts by moving its pawn to e4. It's a very popular opening move as it immediately lays down a claim on the centre spaces. It also frees the bishop and queen for future play.

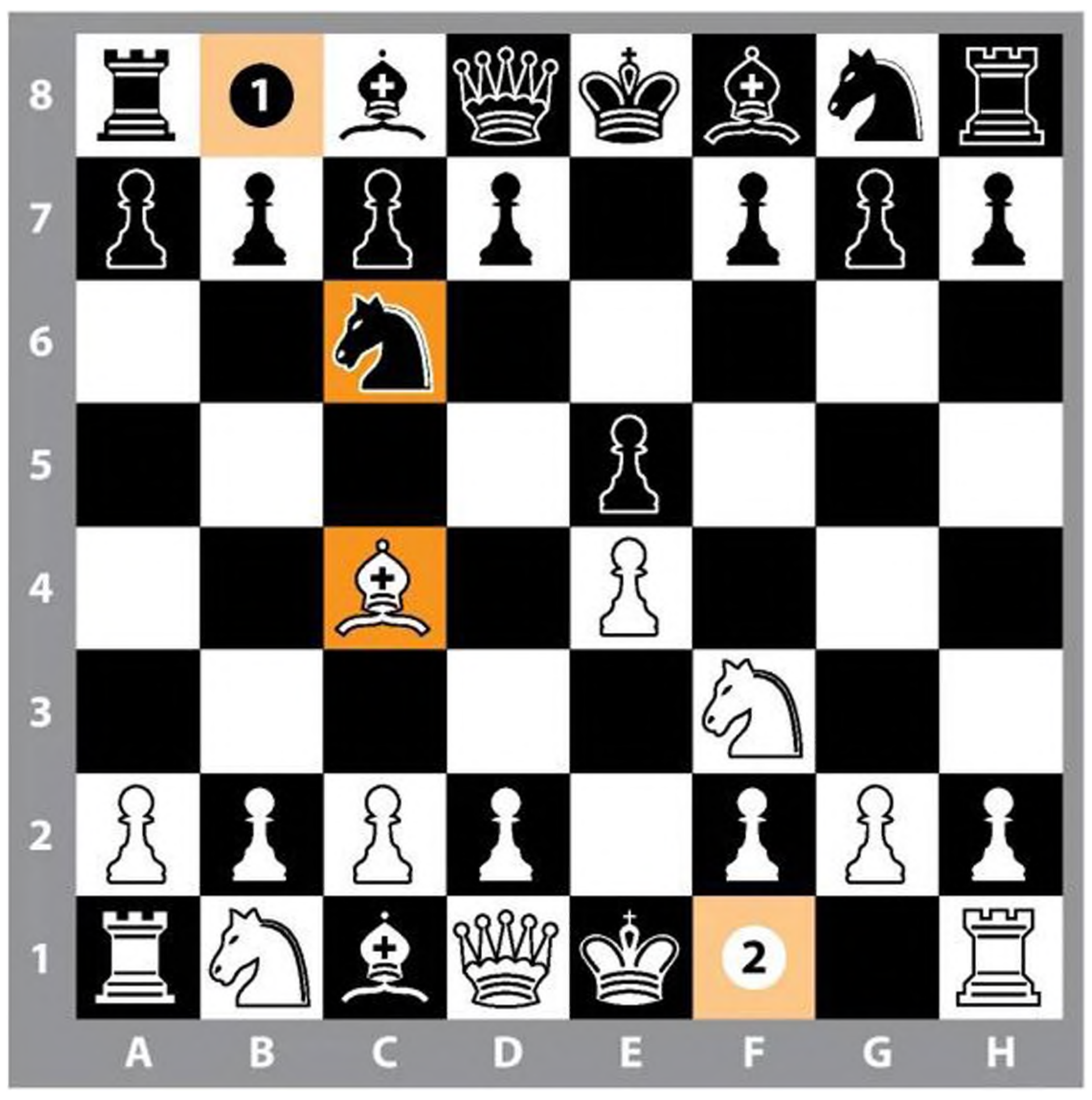


DEFENCE: Black may choose to respond to this opening move in a similar fashion by moving its pawn to e5. At this point we have what is known as an Open Game. From here the game can evolve into a large number of established Open Game procedures.

The Italian Game

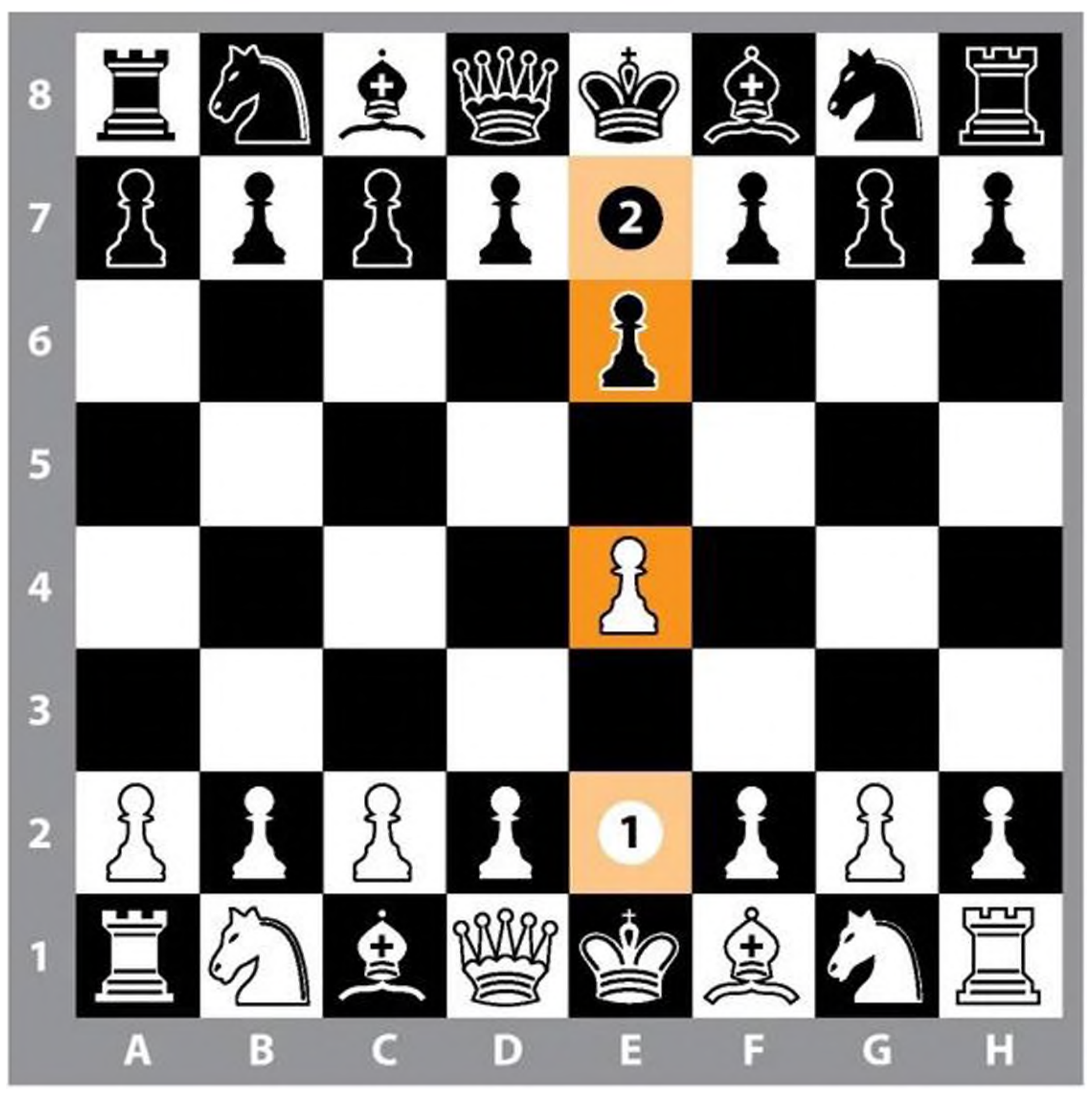


OFFENCE: Perhaps one of the oldest chess openings, the Italian Game is still used today at various levels of play. To start, white pawn(1) moves to e4, followed by black pawn(2) to e5. White knight(3) then moves to f3; this move puts the black pawn under threat.

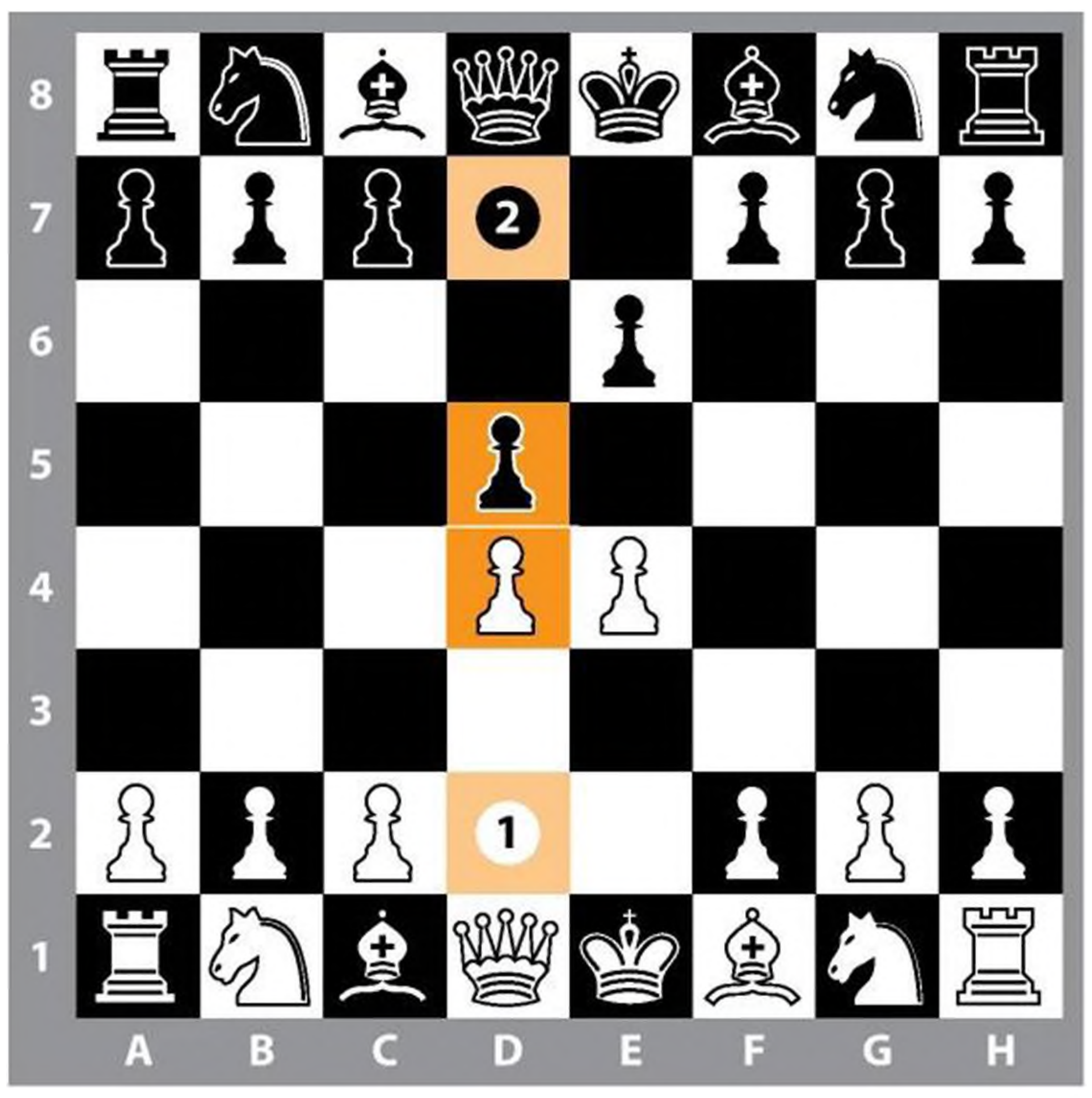


DEFENCE: Black mirrors with its knight(1) by moving to c6 (to protect the exposed black pawn). White can then move its bishop(2) to c4. Now the black pawn at f7 is weak. The Italian Game is known to lead to open positions and aggressive gameplay.

French Defence



OFFENCE: The French Defence involves black conceding some centre space to white. In return, it prevents the potential damage that white's bishop could cause in the Italian Game. White pawn(1) moves to e4; black pawn(2) responds by moving to e6.



DEFENCE: Typically, white may move its pawn(1) to d4 to build up a defence. In response, black can move its opposing pawn(2) to d5. This presents a number of choices for white's pawn as to whether it takes the black pawn. Doing so puts its own pawn at risk.

Ruy Lopez

One of the most popular openings within the game of chess, Ruy Lopez is over 500 years old

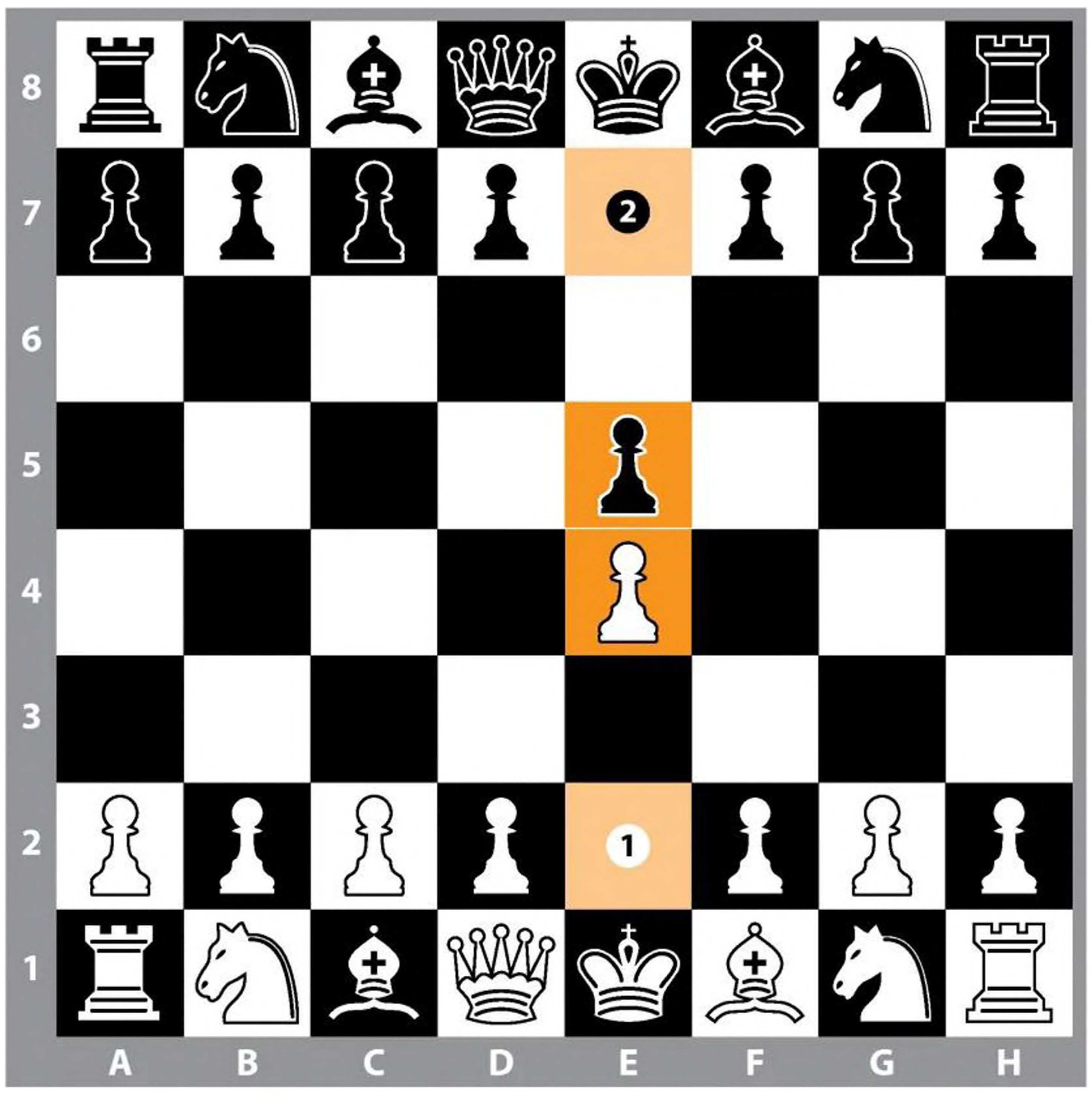
Ruy Lopez is one of the most recognised and popular openings in chess. Originally it was part of a study of various openings by Ruy Lópéz de Segura in 1561. Despite bearing his name, the opening was also included in the Göttingen manuscript. This is the earliest known work devoted to modern chess and dates back to 1490. It wasn't until the mid-19th century that the Ruy Lopez gained popularity when Finnish/Russian chess player Carl Jaenisch 'rediscovered' its potential. The Ruy Lopez has remained a commonly used opening, adopted by many players. It is popular as it allows white players to have a prolonged battle for the initiative.

The opening moves of the Ruy Lopez provide for a tight, tactical flow of play where pieces are constantly being placed under threat. Indeed, the theory behind it is the most extensively developed of all open games. With each move there are various alternatives to choose from and many of these are seen as reasonable moves to make.

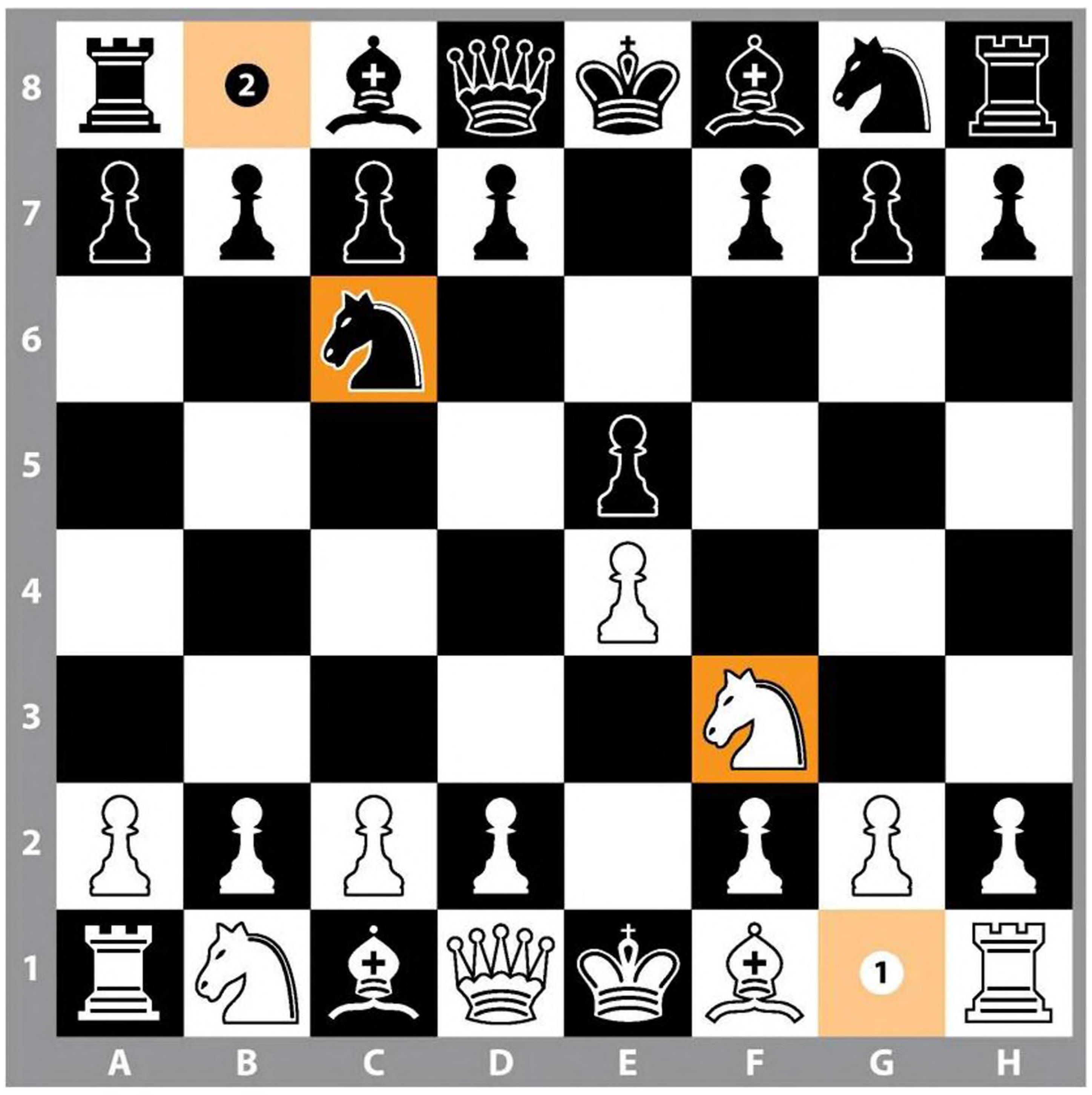
Top tip

Ruy Lopez familiarity

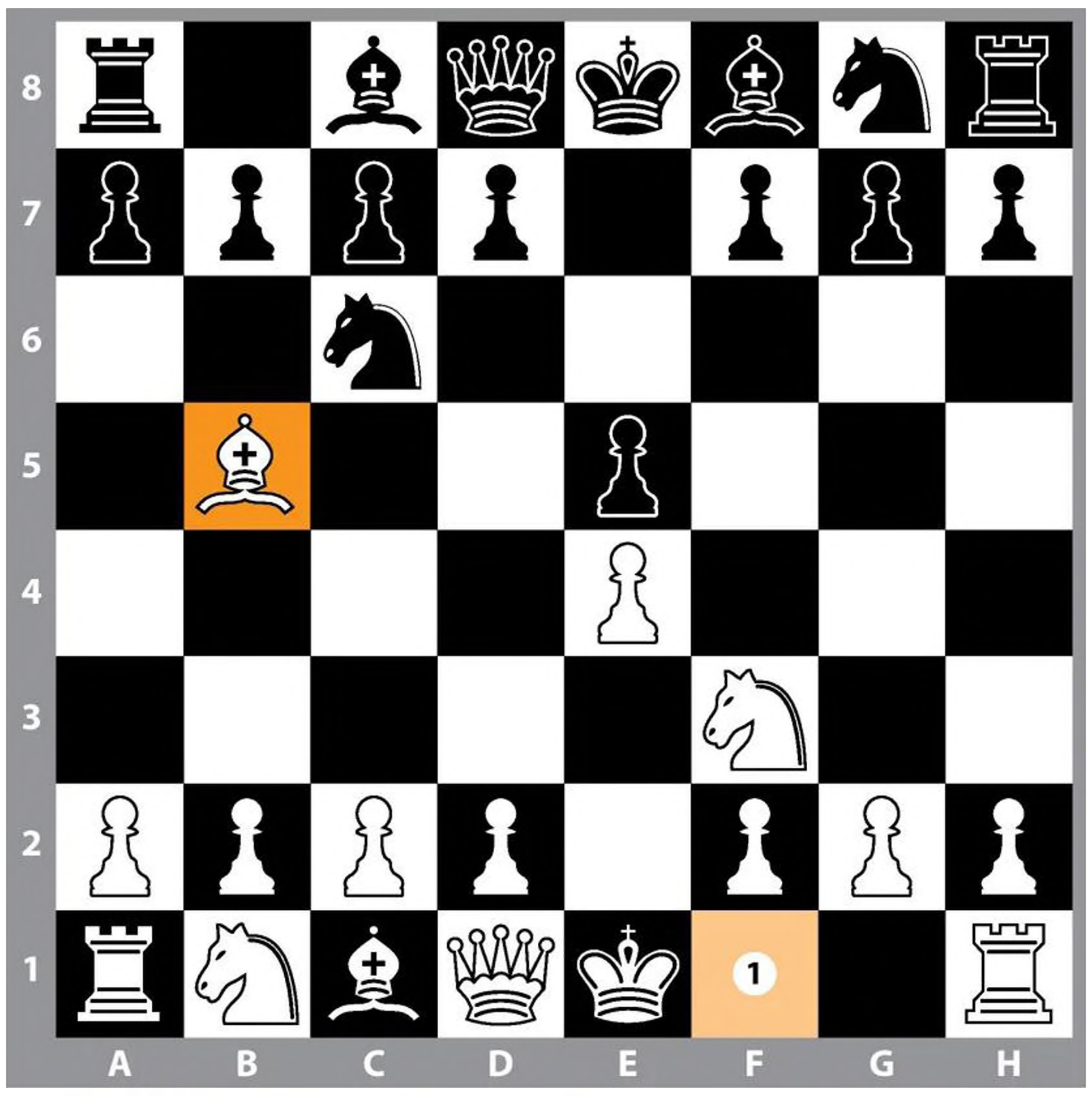
If playing a new opponent, watch them carefully if you open with Ruy Lopez. An experienced player may be familiar with it and have a specific defence at the ready.



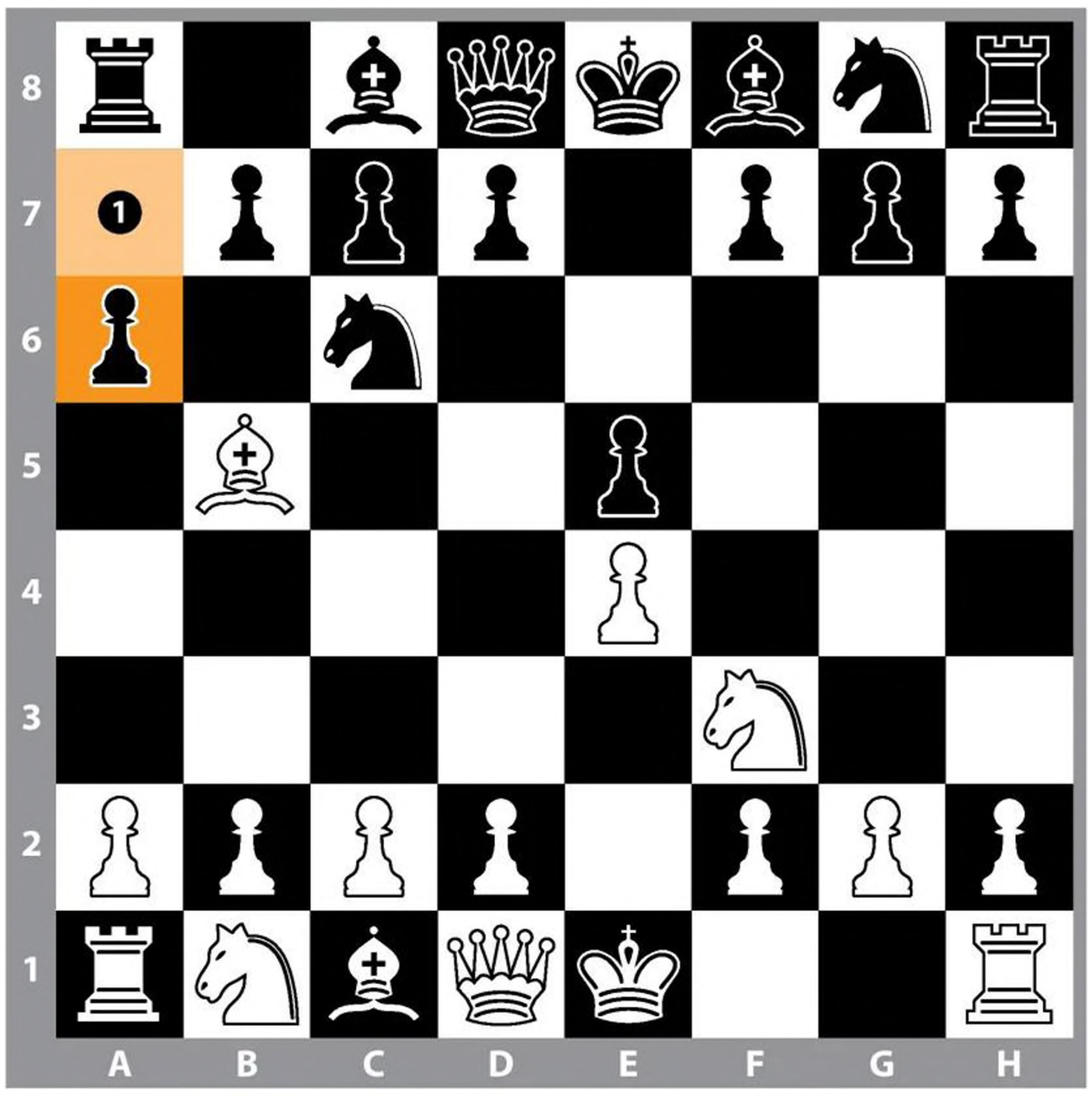
01: Opening moves The Ruy Lopez starts with the white pawn(1) moving to e4. In a mirrored response to white, the black pawn(2) moves to e5.



02: Knights to move white now 'develops' his knight(1) by moving it to f3. This puts a threat on the black pawn. Black knight(2) moves to b6 to provide a defence for the pawn.

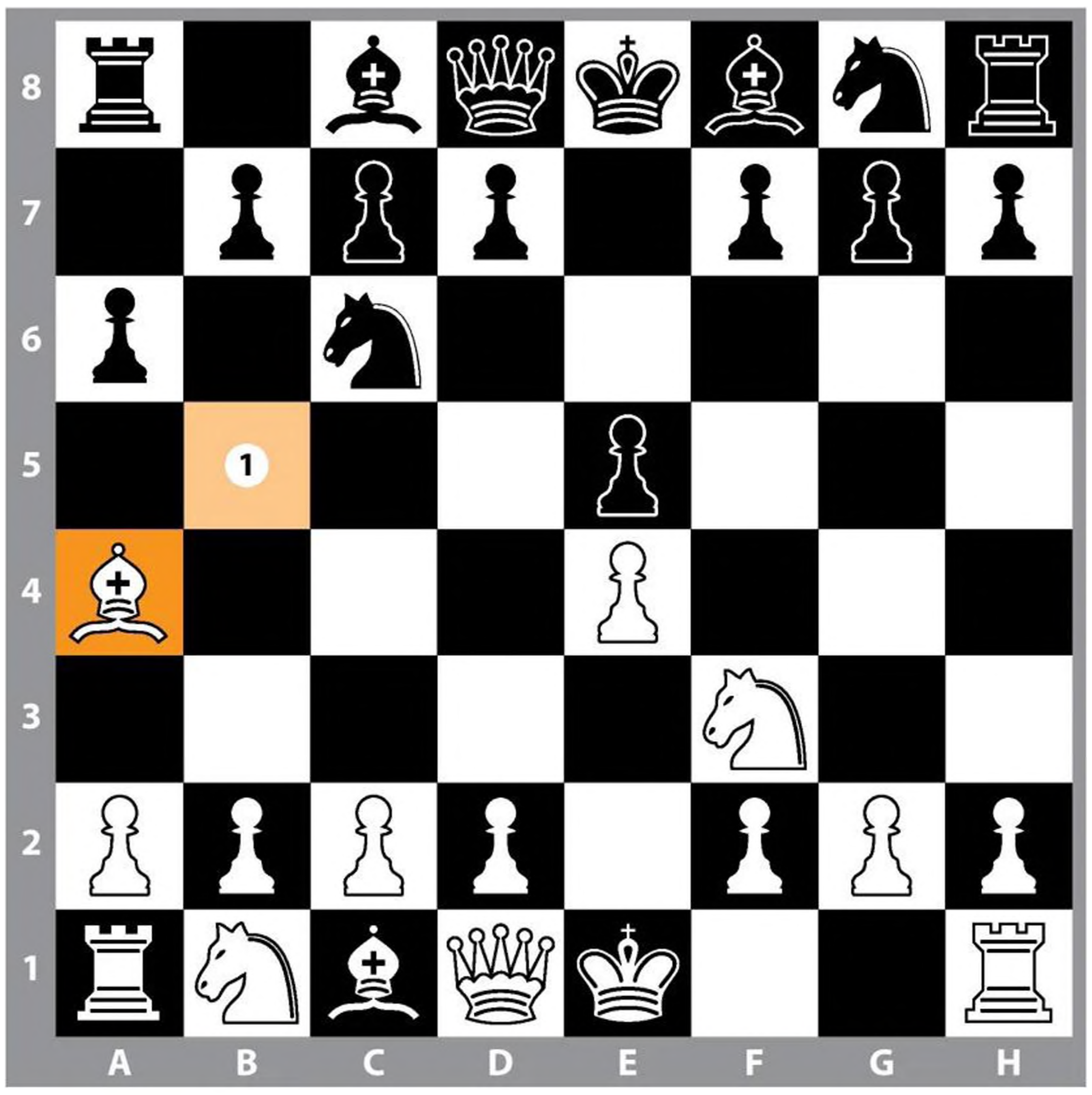


03: Bishop steps out The white bishop(1) can now move to b5. This has pinned down the developed black knight at c6. It also opens up a castle opportunity for the white king.

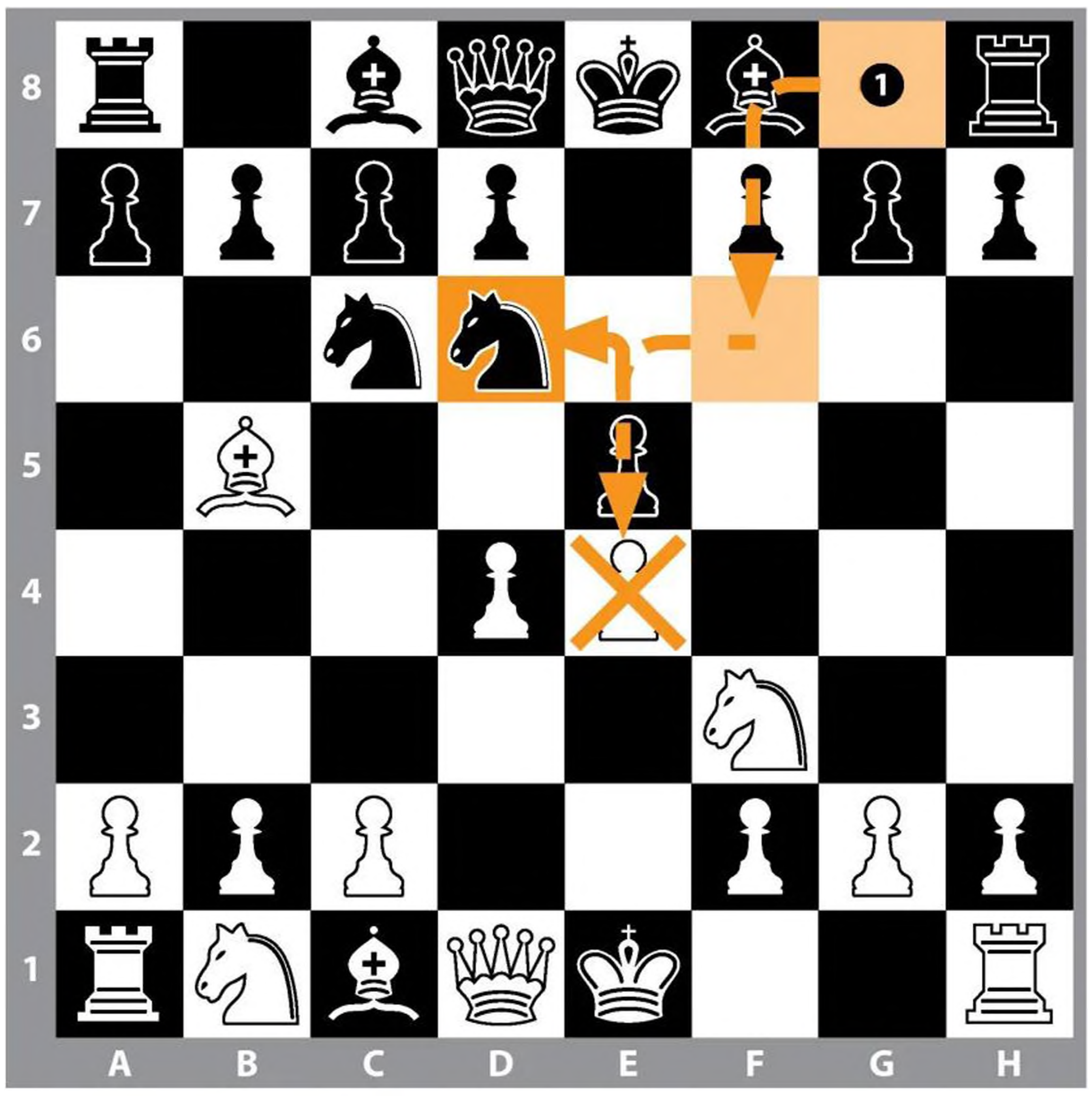


04: Black defends From here a common defence is for black to move pawn to a6, putting the bishop under threat. This is a popular move and is known as the Morphy Defence.

> "With the attacking white bishop now under attack, it is normal for it to make a retreat"



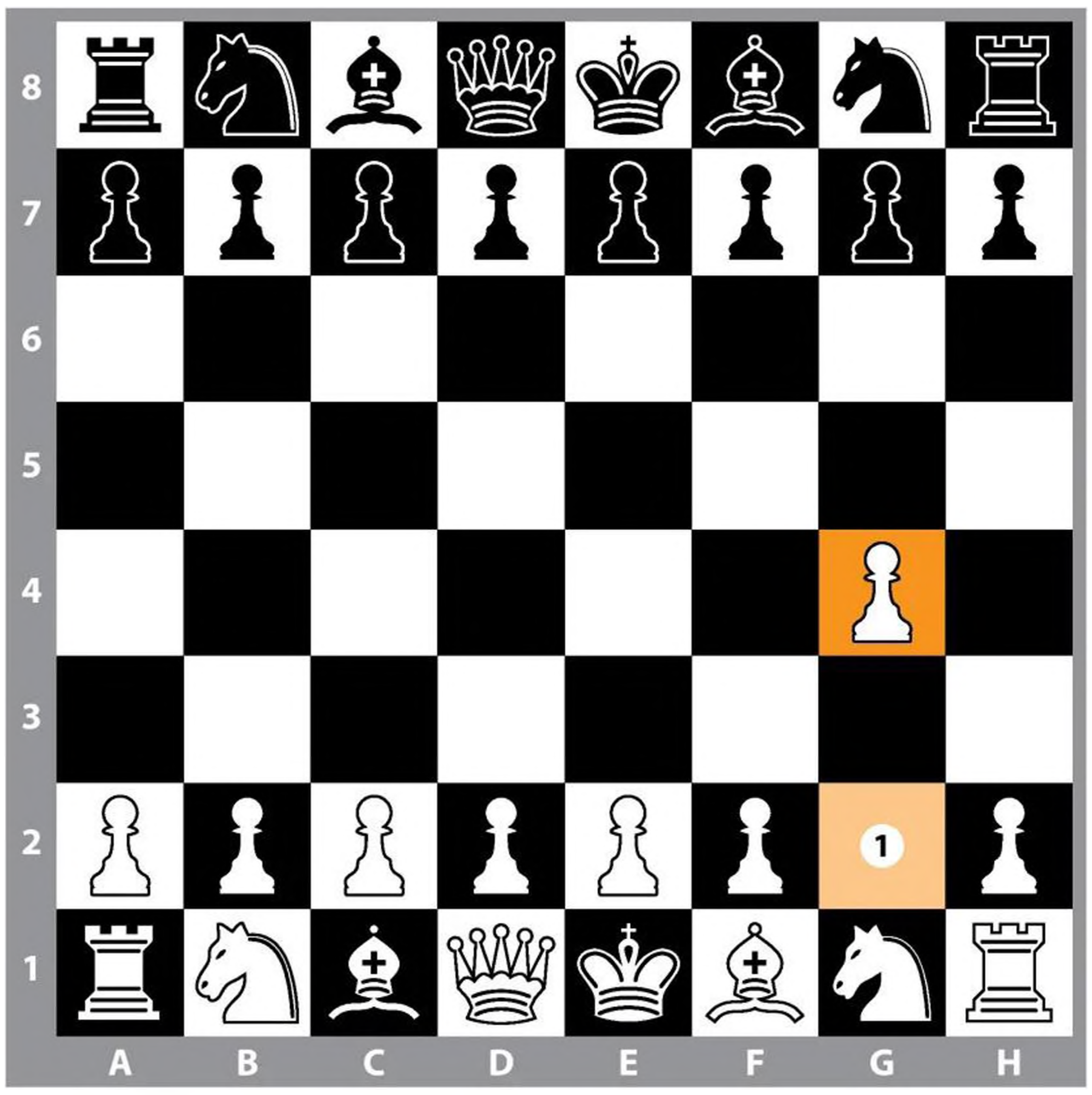
05: White retreats With the attacking white bishop(1) now under attack, it is normal for it to make a retreat. A common move at this juncture is for it to move to a4.



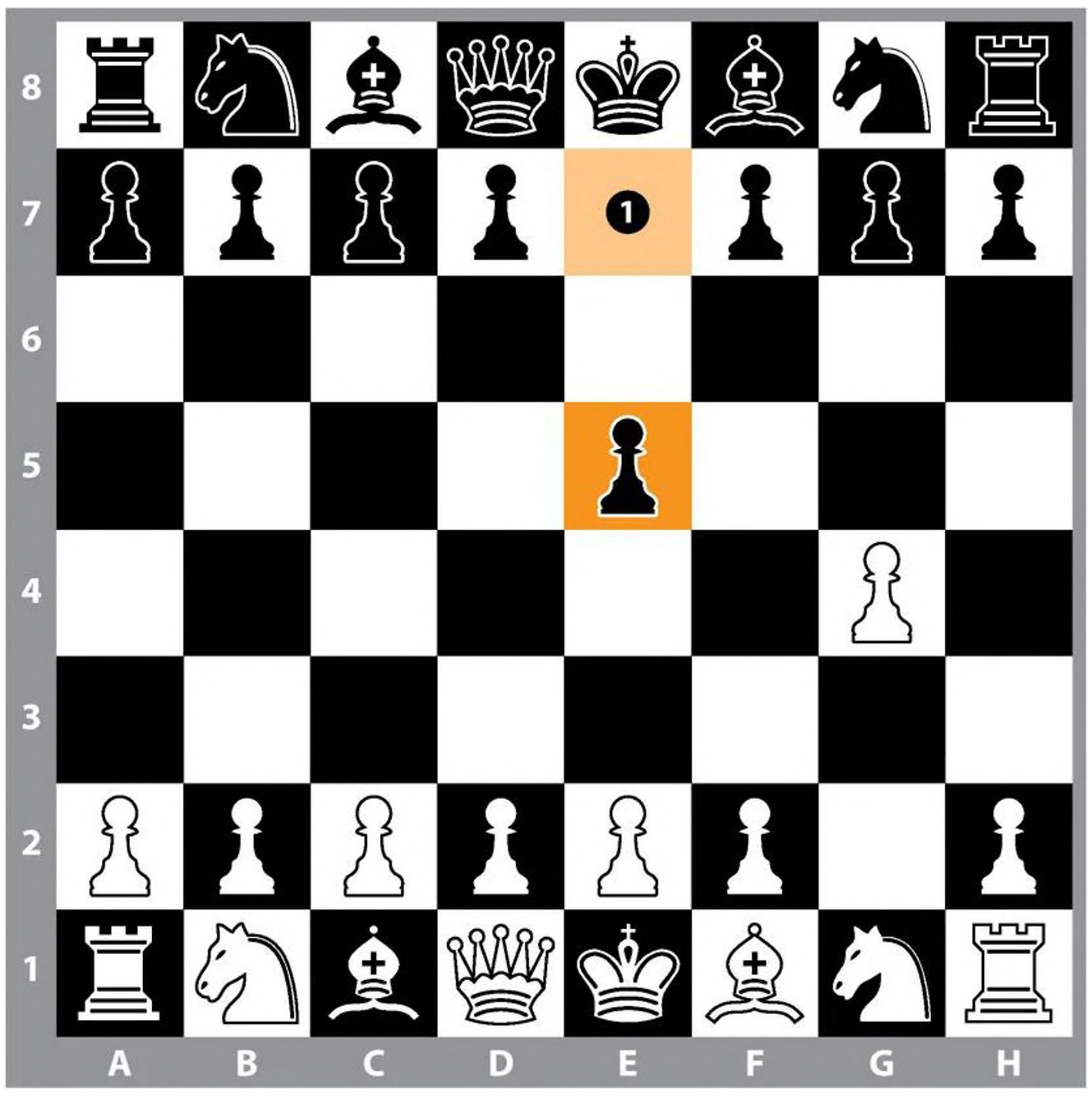
06: Berlin Defence As an alternative to step 4, black could also move knight(1) to f6. This puts the pawn under threat. Following white's move, the black knight can move to d6.

Fool's Mate – What not to do

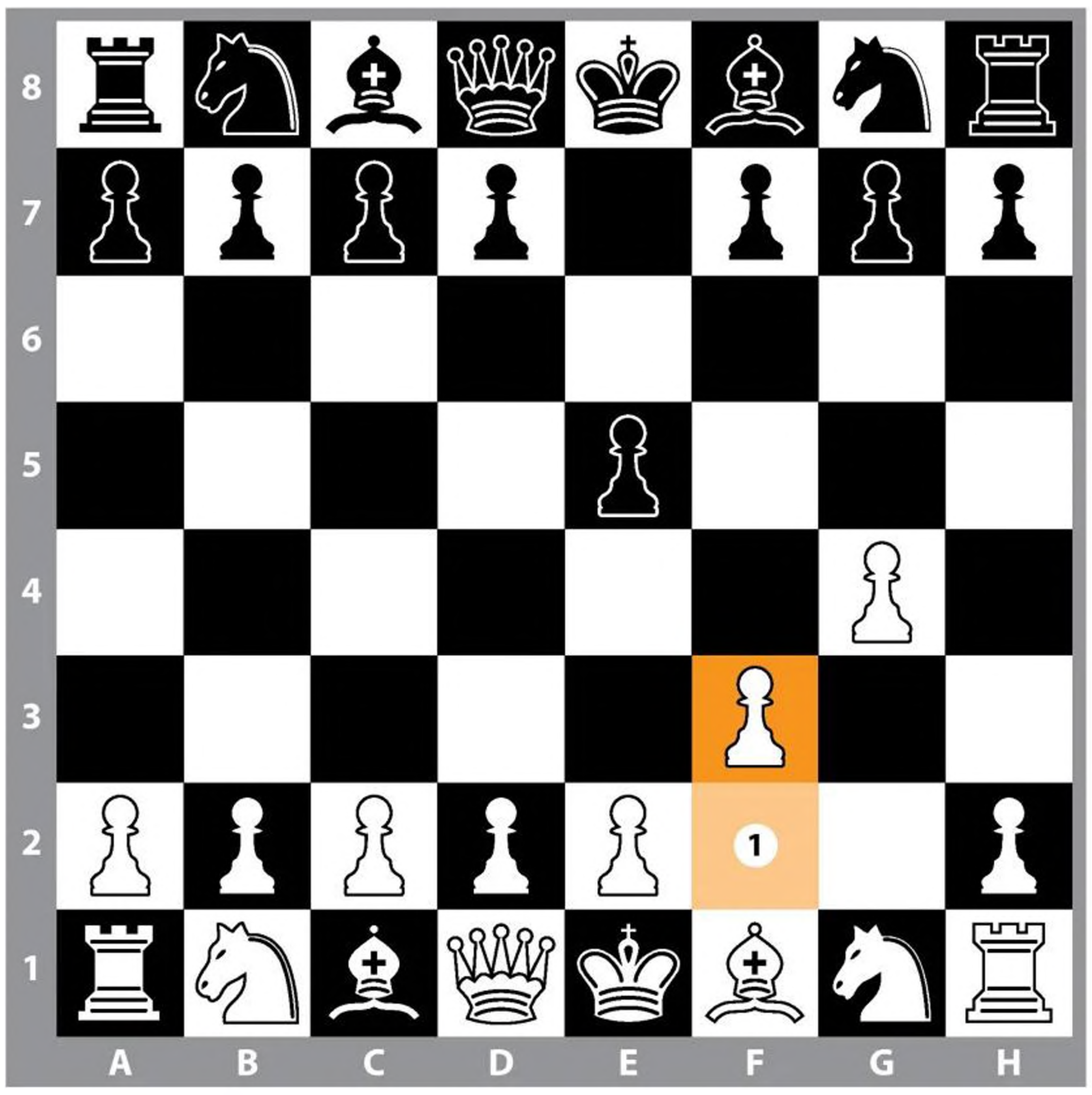
Fool's mate is the quickest possible checkmate in a game of chess. It is also known as the 'Two-Move Checkmate'. It occurs when white makes the error of exposing the king very quickly



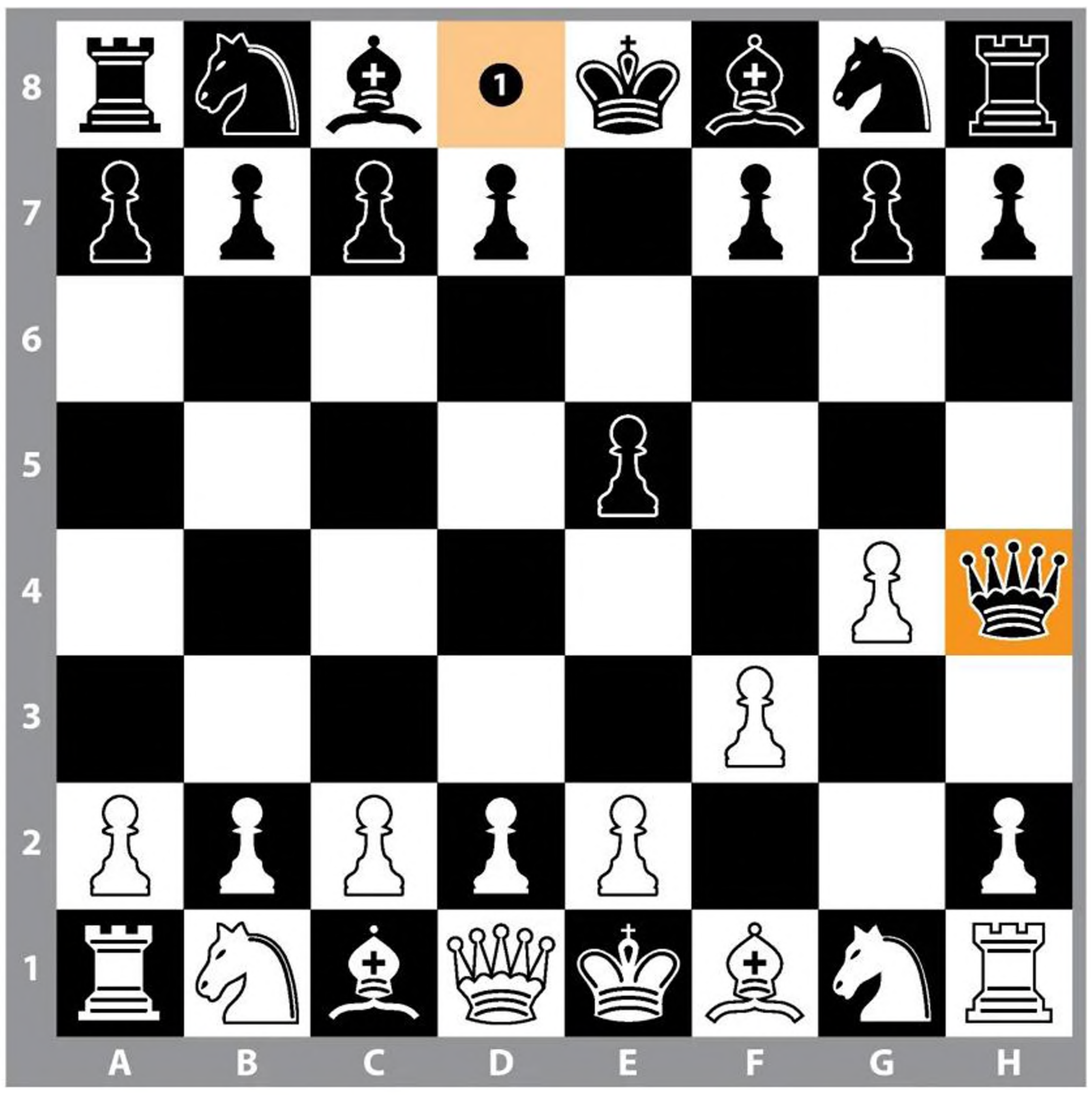
01: White opens The game begins with white moving either their pawn(1) from f3 to f2, or moving the g2 pawn to g4 (pictured). This will help open a line that exposes the king.



02: Black responds If you're playing black and white opens in this way, you can respond by moving your pawn(2) from e7 to e5. This will allow your queen to push out shortly.



03: White pawn moves You need to watch what white does next. If they make the other pawn(1) move from step 1 (in this case from f3 to f2), you're ready to strike.



04: Check and mate This is where black strikes. White has left a channel to their king wide open. Black can now move their queen(1) to h4. The white king is trapped. Checkmate!

The Sicilian Defence

This defence is the most popular and best-scoring response to white's e4 opening move

1 E4 opening

The game starts with the popular white move of pawn to e4. It's an aggressive move with an immediate claim for the centre of the board.

2 Black's response

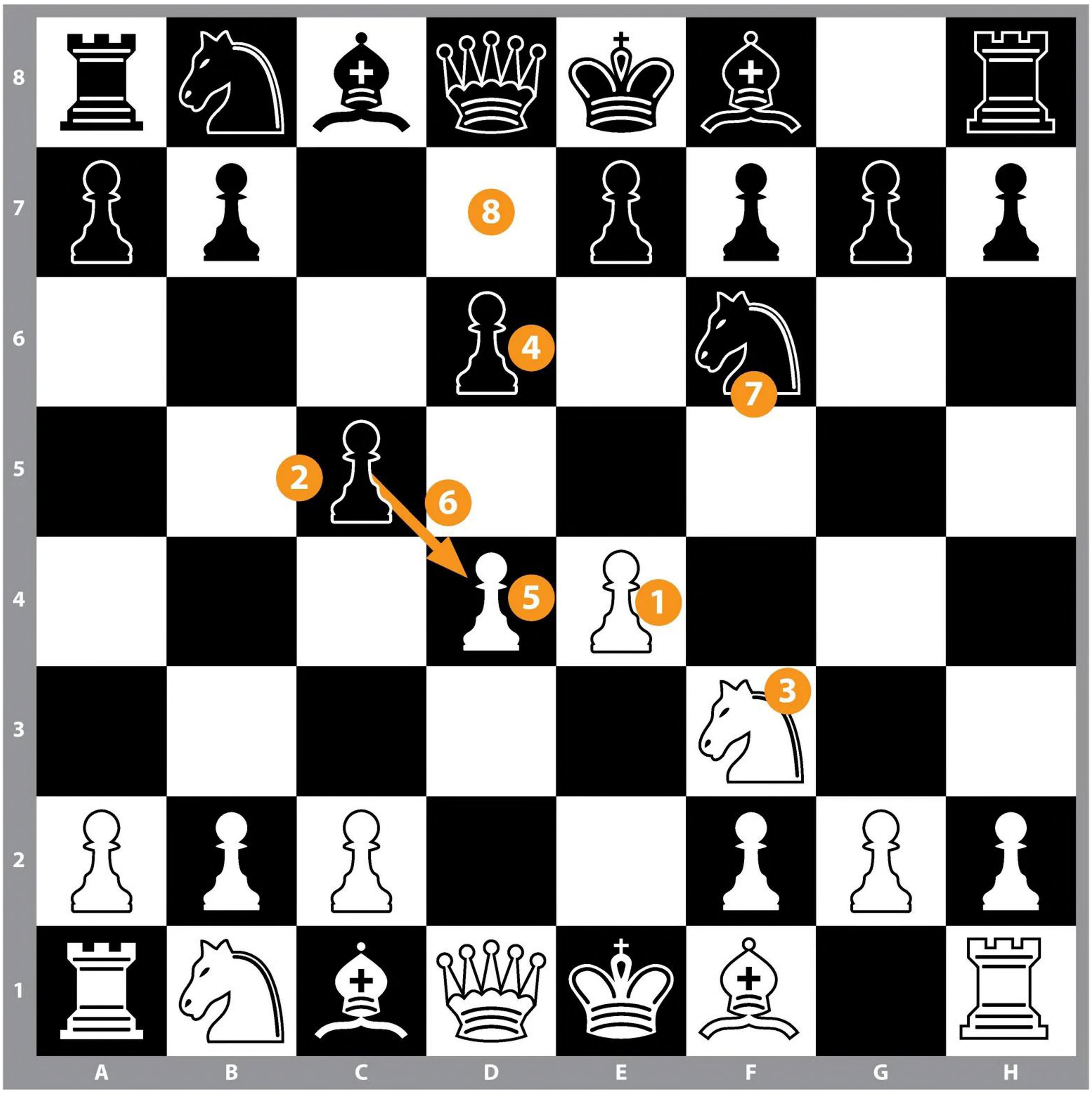
With the Sicilian Defence, black moves pawn to c5. It's a move that covers the d4 square, preventing white from also claiming that space immediately.

3 White knight develops

A common move now is for white to develop his knight. The knight can hop over other pieces, so no time is wasted with making room for it to move.

4 Black pushes defence

bBack is likely looking to keep white's advances at bay. It can move its queen pawn to d6. The white pawn at e4 now cannot move without being taken.



5 White pawn advance

White can, however, move its d2 pawn forward. Thanks to the positioning of the knight at f3, the white pawn has protection when moving to d4.

6 Black pawn takes white

It's likely that black will look to take the pawn at d4. While this puts the pawn at risk, the upshot is clearing the white pawn defence on the queen's line.

7 Black knight advances

The black knight can now move forward to f6. This puts immediate pressure on the pawn at e4. It is now something of an unwanted obstacle for white.

8 The state of play

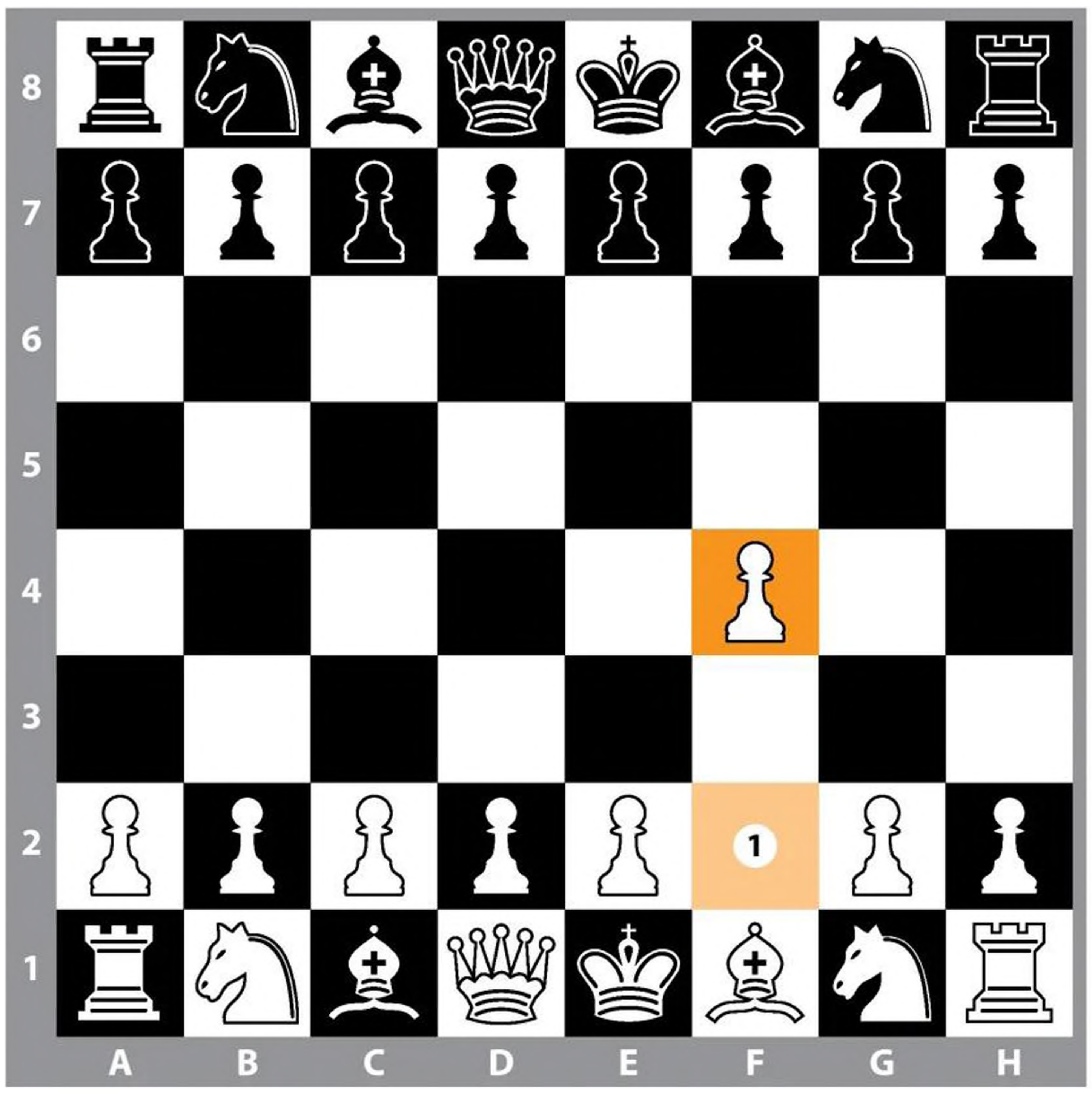
At this point, the game has an interesting balance. White has more development available but is exposed centrally. Black has a stronger central pawn majority.

The role of each piece

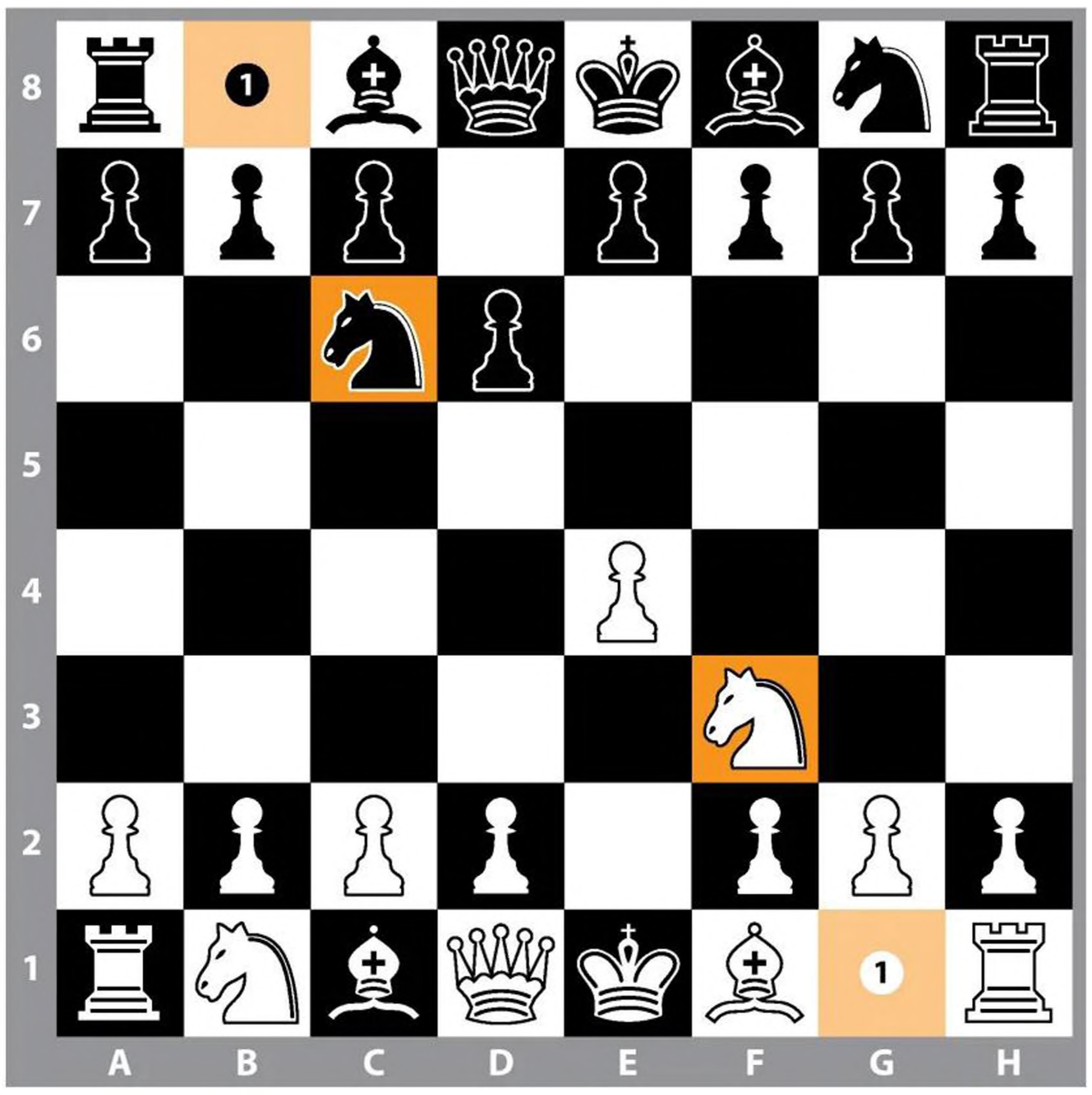
The way you deploy your pieces during the opening may determine your options further down the line. Learning how to apply the right piece in the right location can make all the difference

There are many schools of thought with regards to opening. If you research what methods are best you'll generally find a few common threads. One such example is controlling the centre of the board. Getting your pieces towards the centre of the board can give a more controlling reach over the board. As a result, you can find that you may have a greater ability to dictate the progress of the match than your opponent. To this extent, pawns can be handy to have on e4, e5, d4 or d5 (depending on your colour).

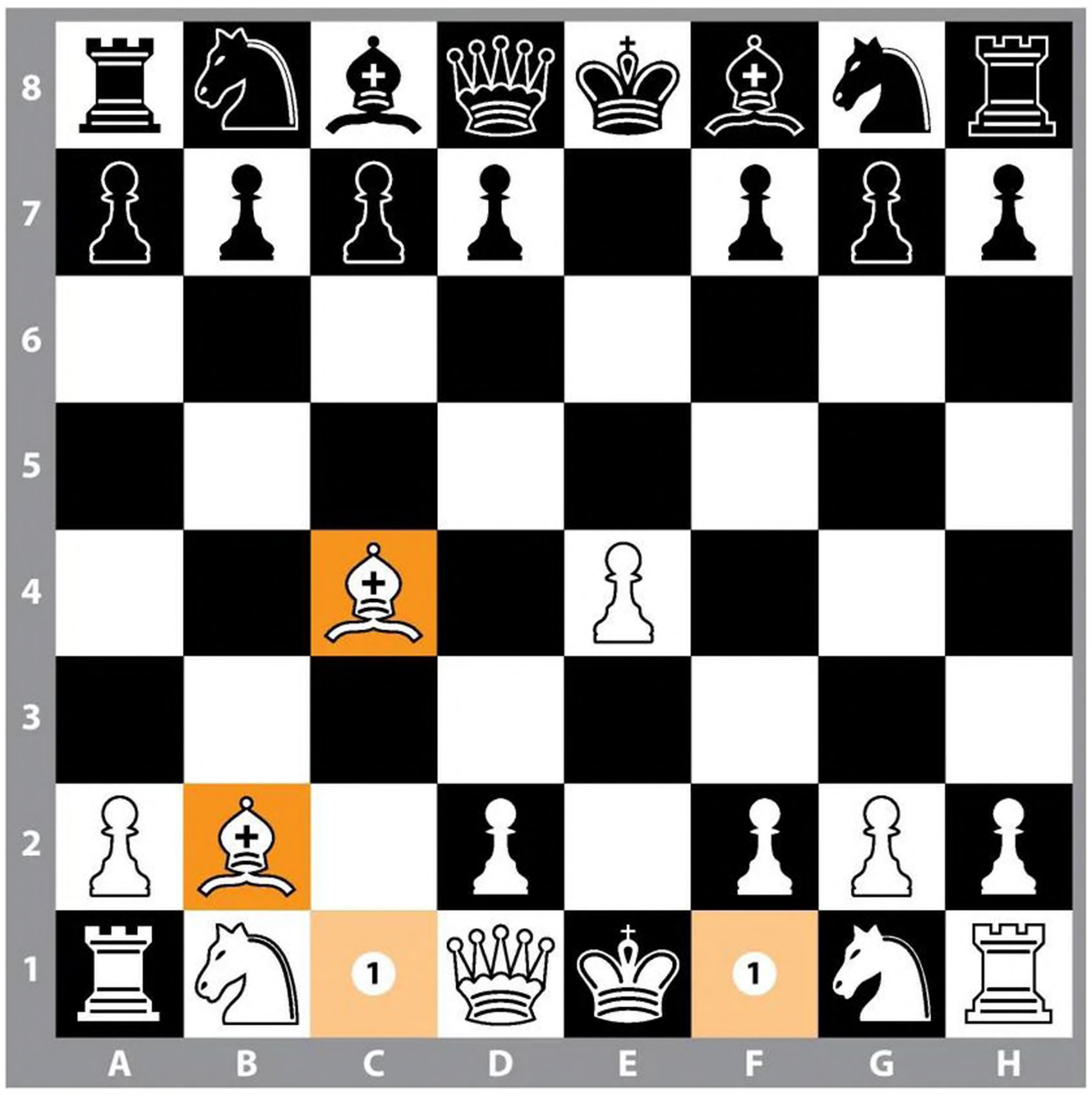
As mentioned previously, it is also seen as important to 'develop' your pieces such as the knight and the bishop (for a number of players, this is also the recommended order). While the opening is in progress, it is also seen as a waste to move a piece more than once in your first ten moves. The idea of getting more pieces developed is that it restricts the available squares to your opponent. By moving a piece twice, you may lose a chance to develop another piece.



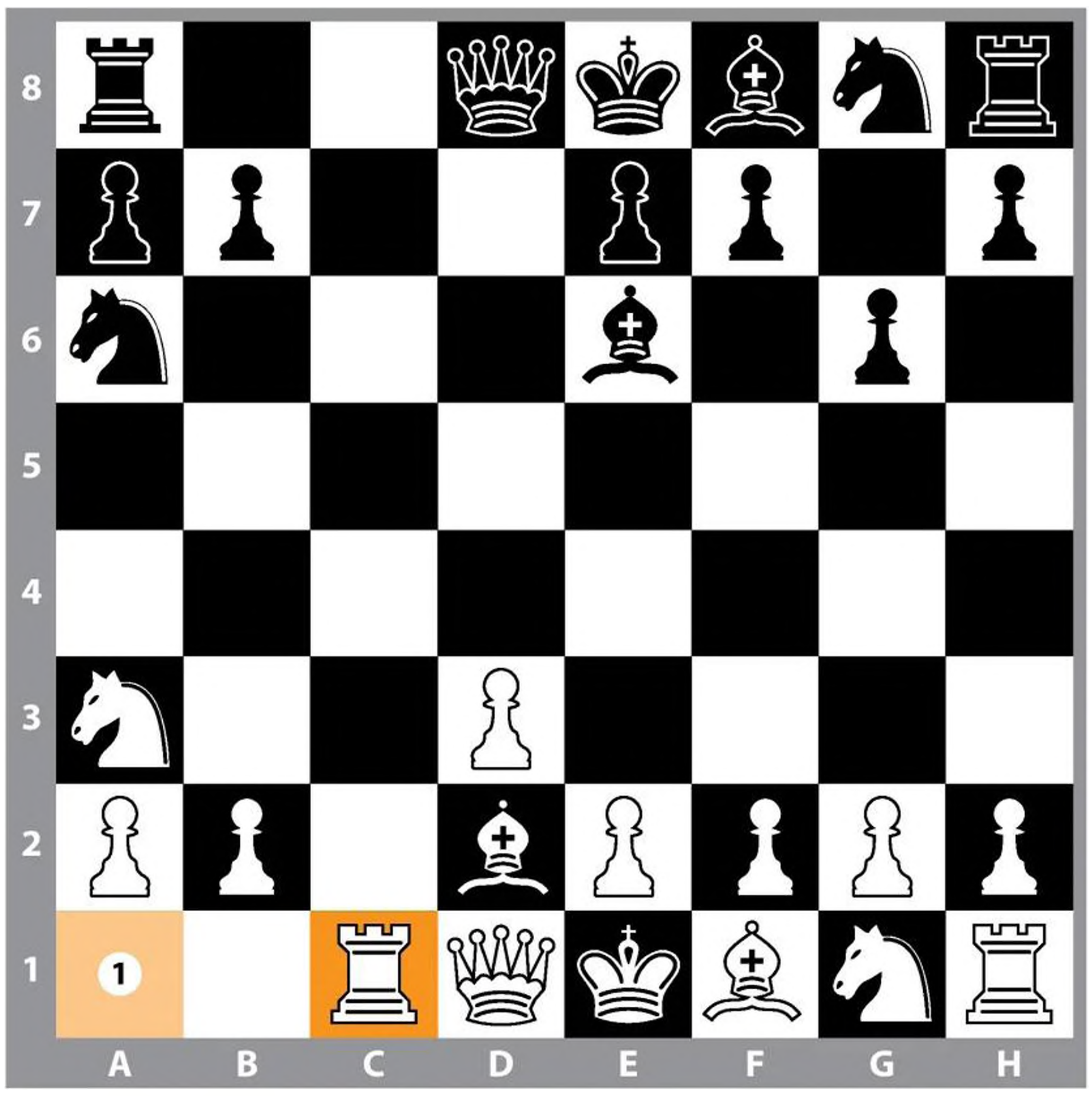
01: The pawns When making their first move, pawns(1) can either move one space or two. In the opening, it is important to move the right pawns to allow other pieces to develop.



02: Knights It is said that it is best to get your minor pieces out early in the game. Developing knights(1) before bishops is generally seen as a good approach.

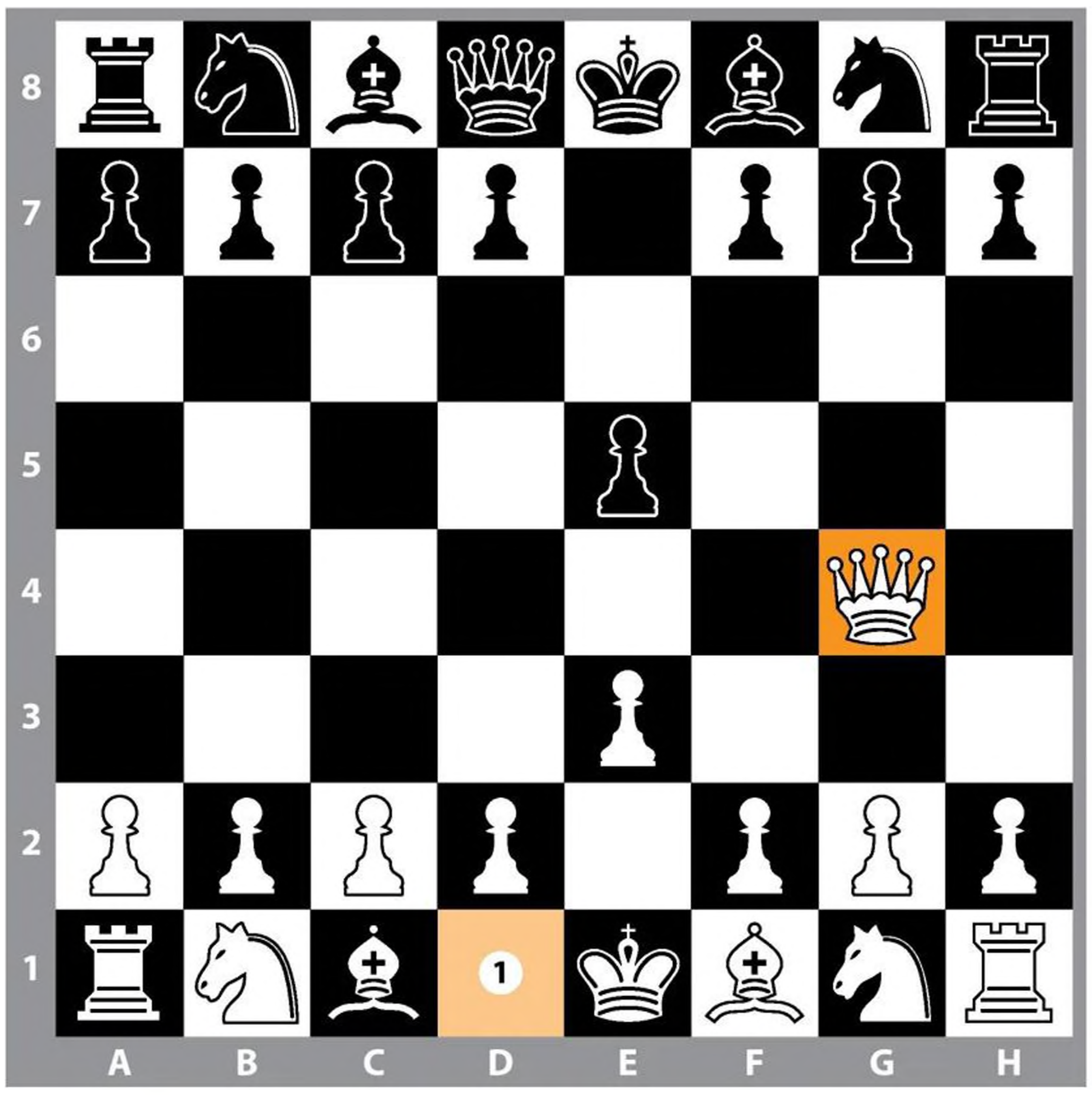


03: Bishops Bishops(1) can be powerful when used properly. When placed in open positions (such as in the diagram), their far reach can lay down a good line of offence.

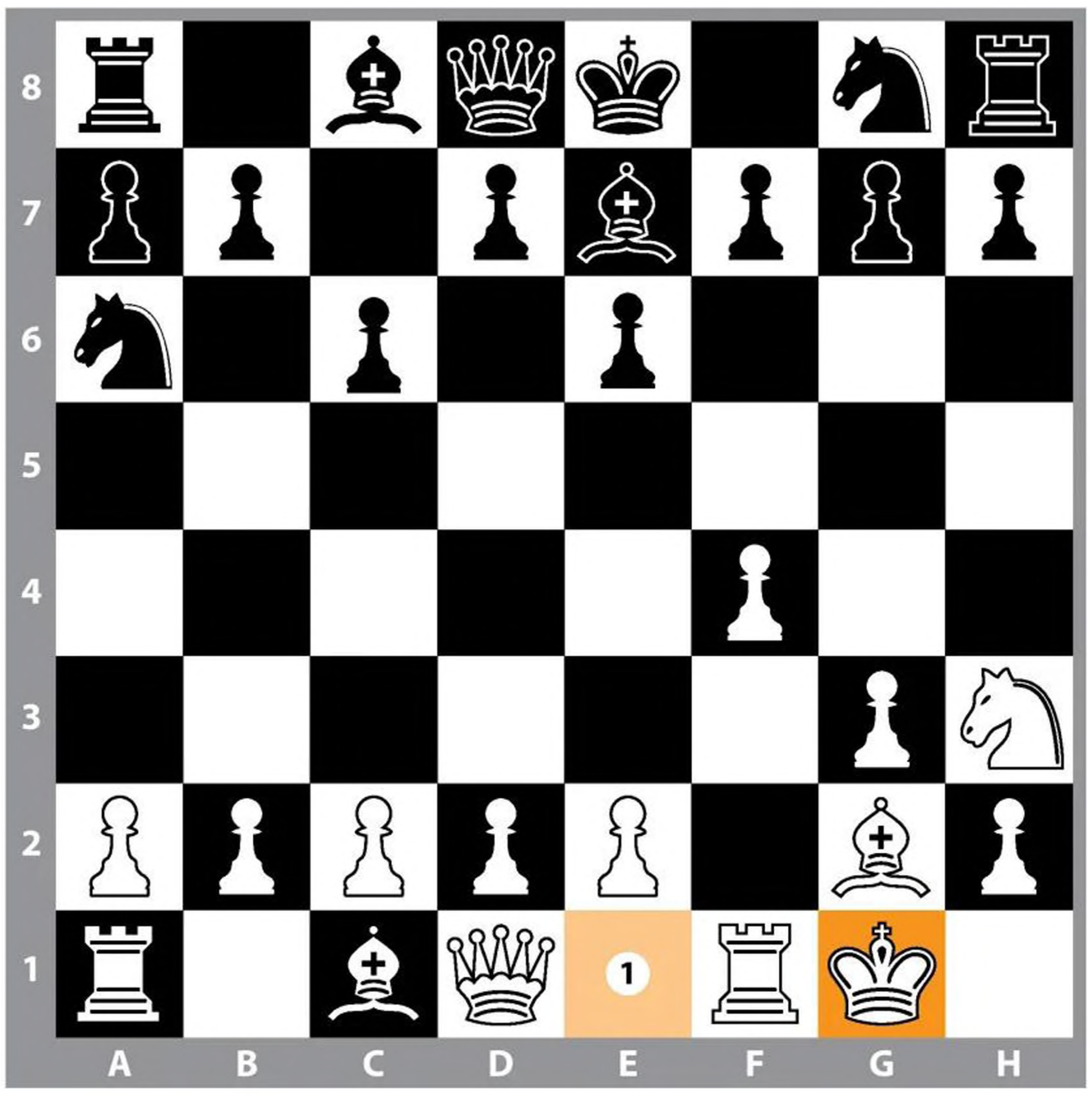


04: Rooks Rooks(1) are powerful but are not so involved within the opening due to how they are blocked in by other pieces. As with bishops, it's good to get them into clear lines.

"When placed in open positions, bishops' far reach can lay down a good line of offence"



05: The queen The most powerful piece, the queen(1) should take a back seat in the opening stages the. It doesn't need to develop straight away and put itself at unnecessary risk.



06: The king During your opening you may wish to 'castle' your king(1). This helps to place it in a safer position, although the process is subject to various rules.

Capturing pieces

Capturing enemy pieces is important, but knowing how and when to capture them is a key component to victory

Top tip

Look before leaping

A key factor of chess is being aware of your opponent's pieces. What was their last move? Where could they progress? Before rushing into a capture, ensure you're not leaving any other pieces exposed.

In a game of chess, the ultimate goal is to trap the enemy's king whilst defending your own king from checkmate. In the process of this happening, each player will have the opportunity to capture pieces that belong to the other player. This occurs when a piece is able to land on a space that is already occupied by another piece on the opposing side. When this happens, the enemy piece is deemed as captured and then removed from the chessboard. Each piece has its own methods and strengths regarding capturing. Part of winning a match is weakening your opponent's forces as more pieces are captured. By that token, being able to avoid capture will also help the strength of your position as you play.

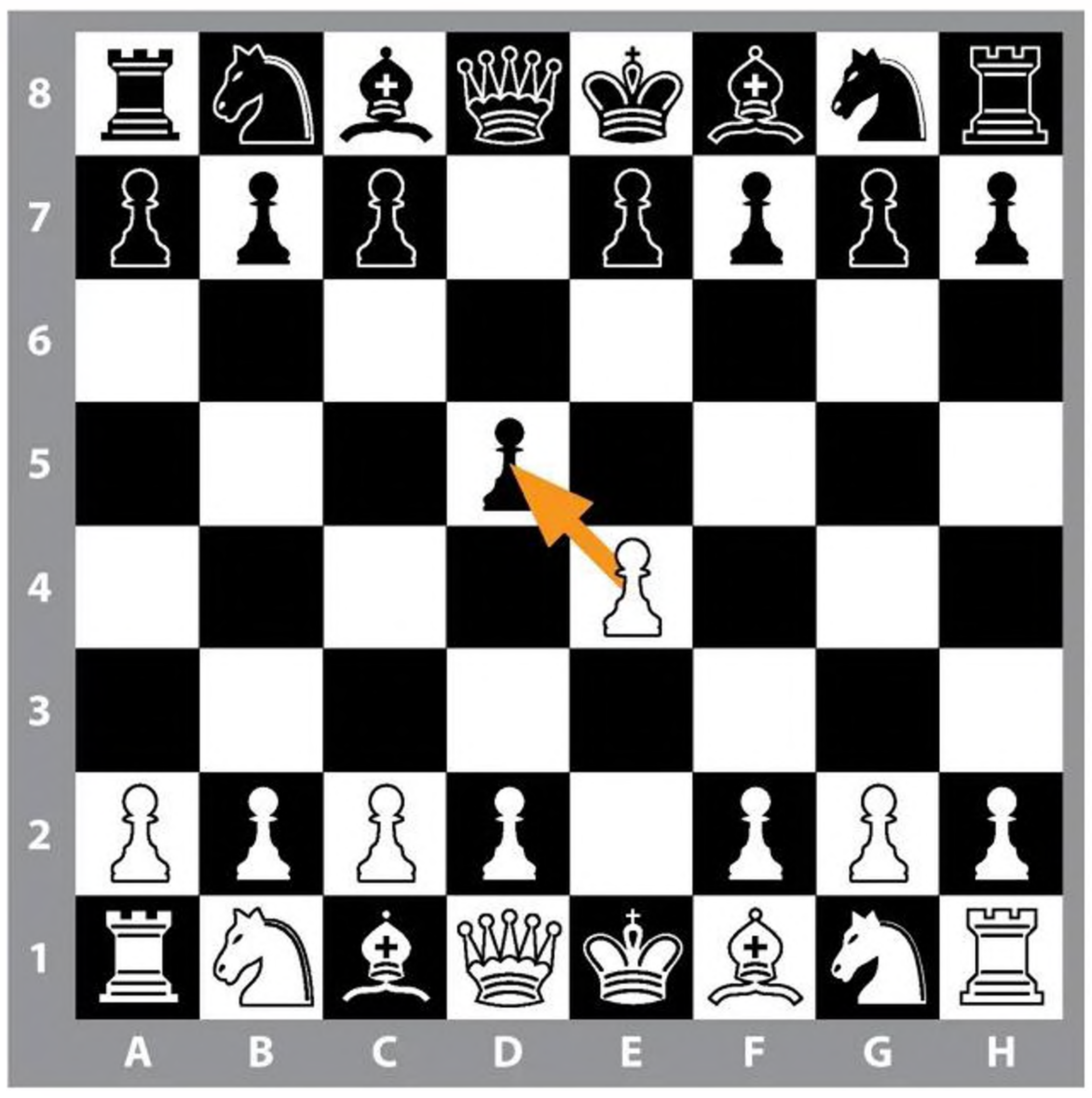
There are varying kinds of capture; some may involve a 'safe' capture where the target piece is not within range of any pieces on the same team. As a result, an attacking piece will not be exposed to any danger once they have completed their turn. Conversely, there may be a time when making a capture will put the attacking piece at risk. At those moments, it's worth considering whether capturing a piece is worth the sacrifice that may follow afterwards.

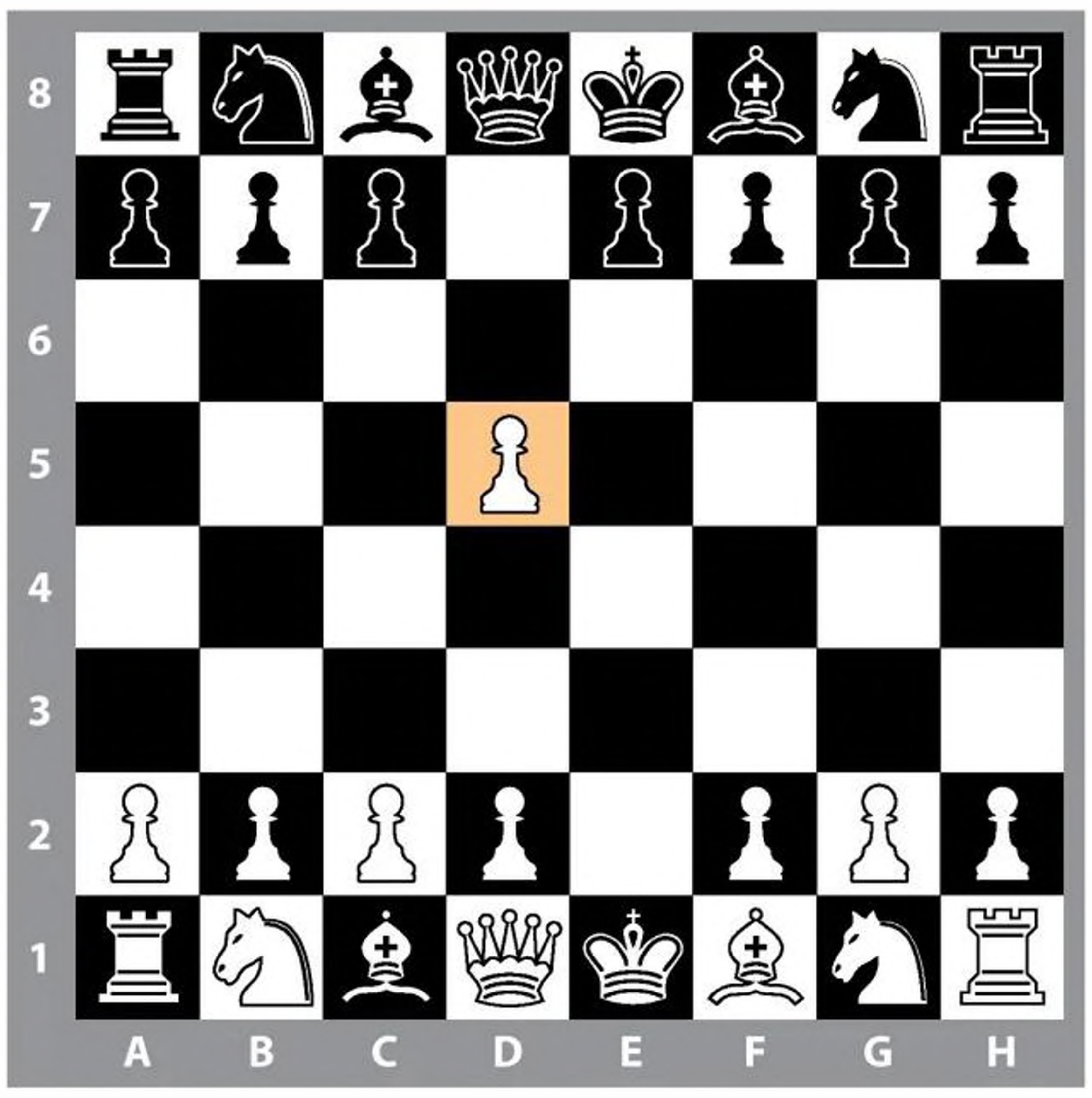
How each piece captures

On this page and the next, we detail the ways in which the six different chess piece types capture opposing pieces on the board

Pawn

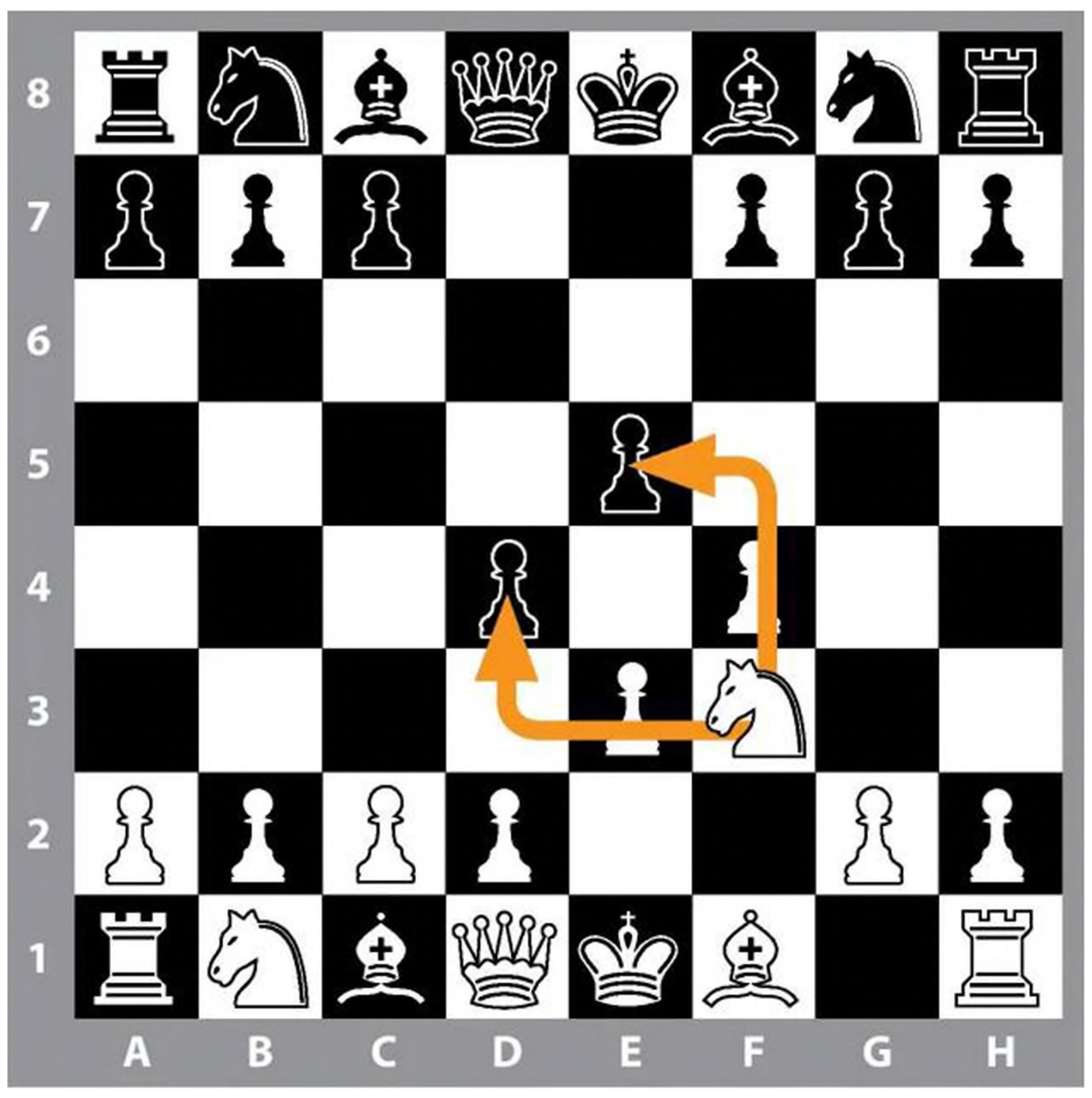
The pawn is unique among the pieces in that it performs a different capture move compared to how it normally moves. A pawn would normally move straight forward but when capturing another piece, the pawn will actually move forward in a diagonal direction to take it. This can cause problems, however, since your line of defence can become broken or leave you with two pawns in one file.

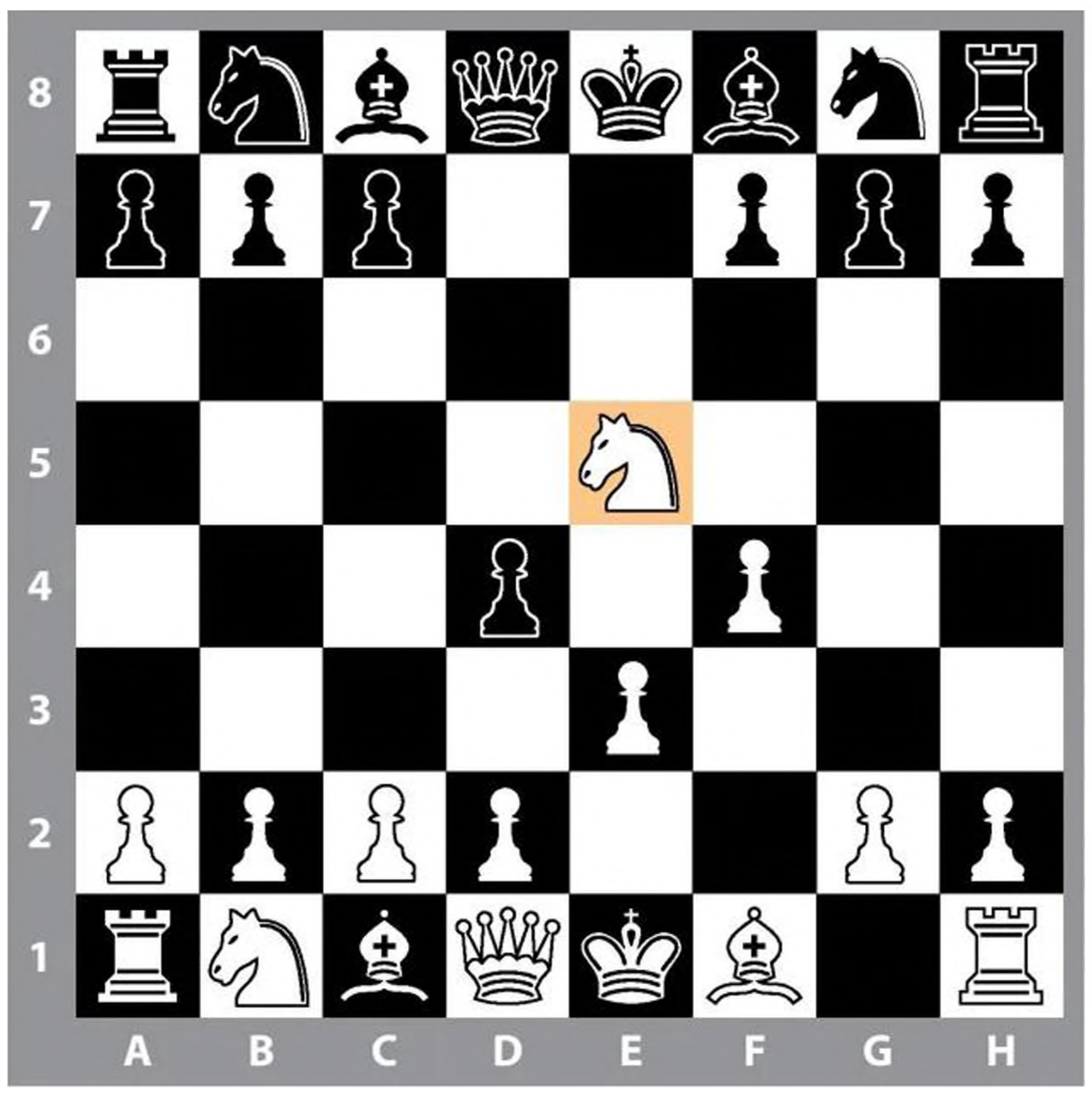




Knight

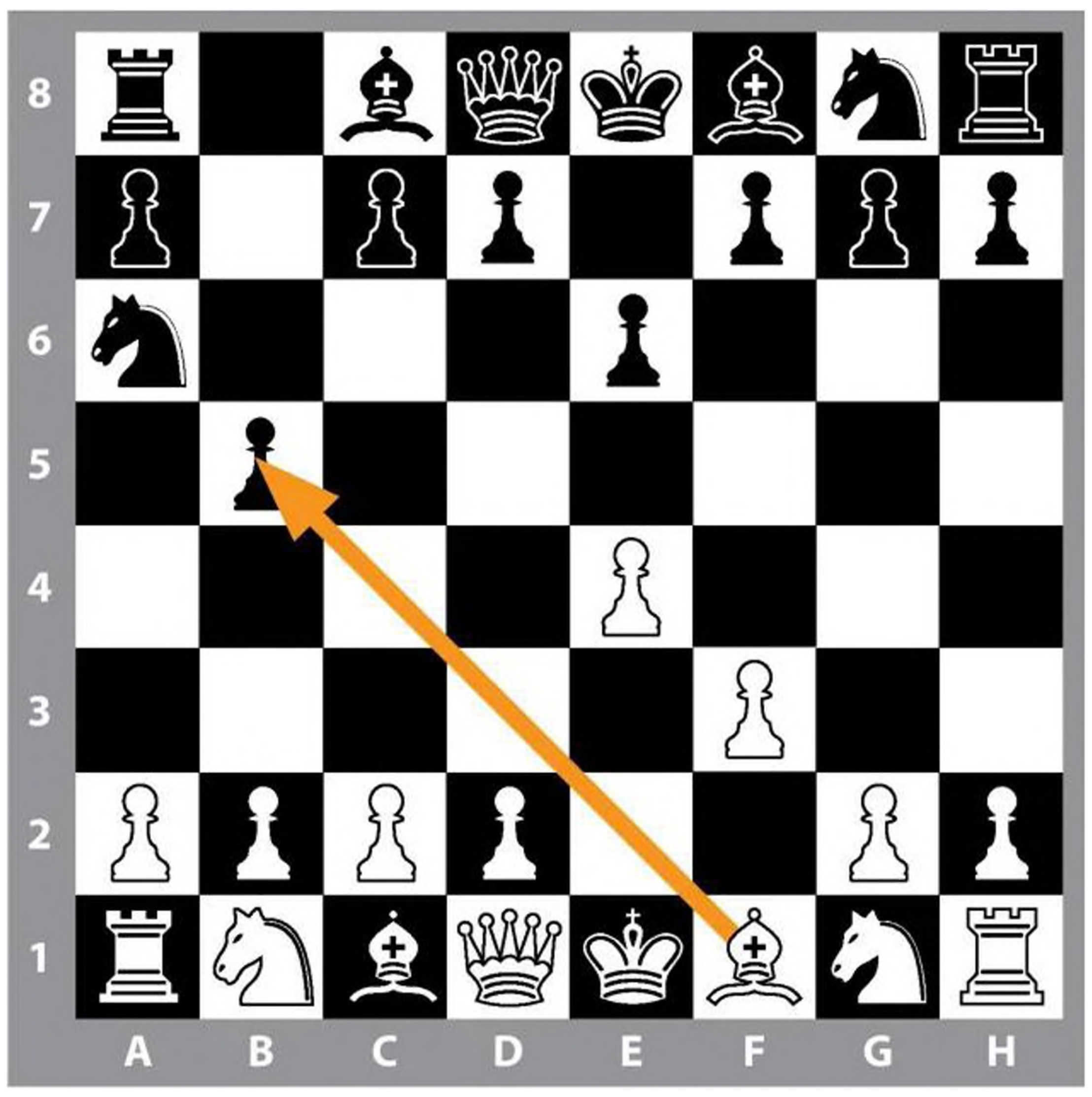
The knight is capable of something that other pieces cannot do– it can jump over other pieces as it moves. As shown in the diagram, it is most powerful when nearer the centre of the board (where it can reach any of the black pawns). Here the knight is able to capture two different pawns, however, if it took d4 then the e5 would be able to do then take the knight on its next move.

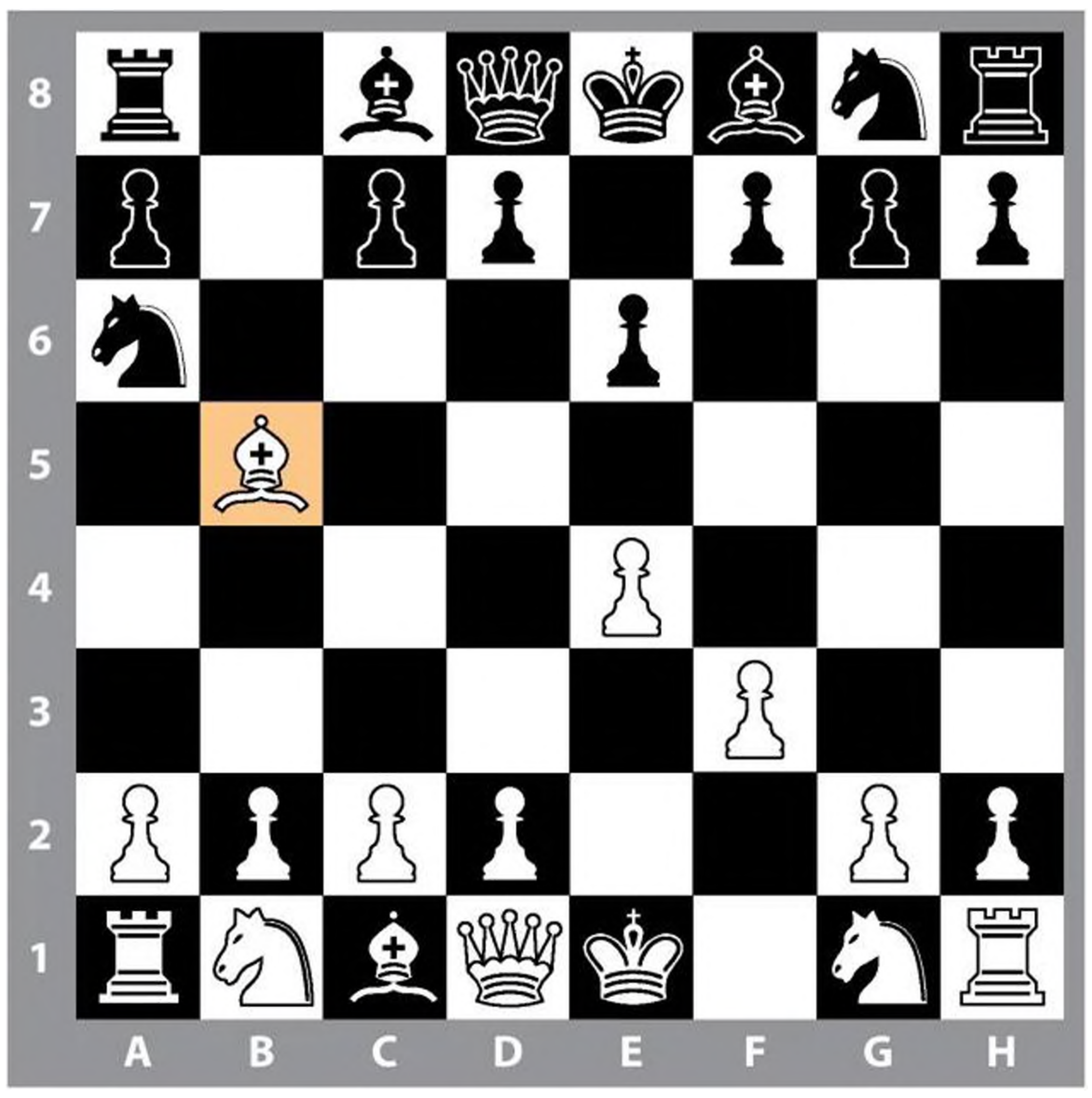




Bishop

The bishop has no restriction upon how far it can travel in each move. It is limited to purely diagonal movement, however, and cannot leap over other pieces. Bishops become more powerful towards the endgame, when their reach gives them more lines on which to operate. To take, they must have a clear run to the piece and be able to land on the square with their movement.

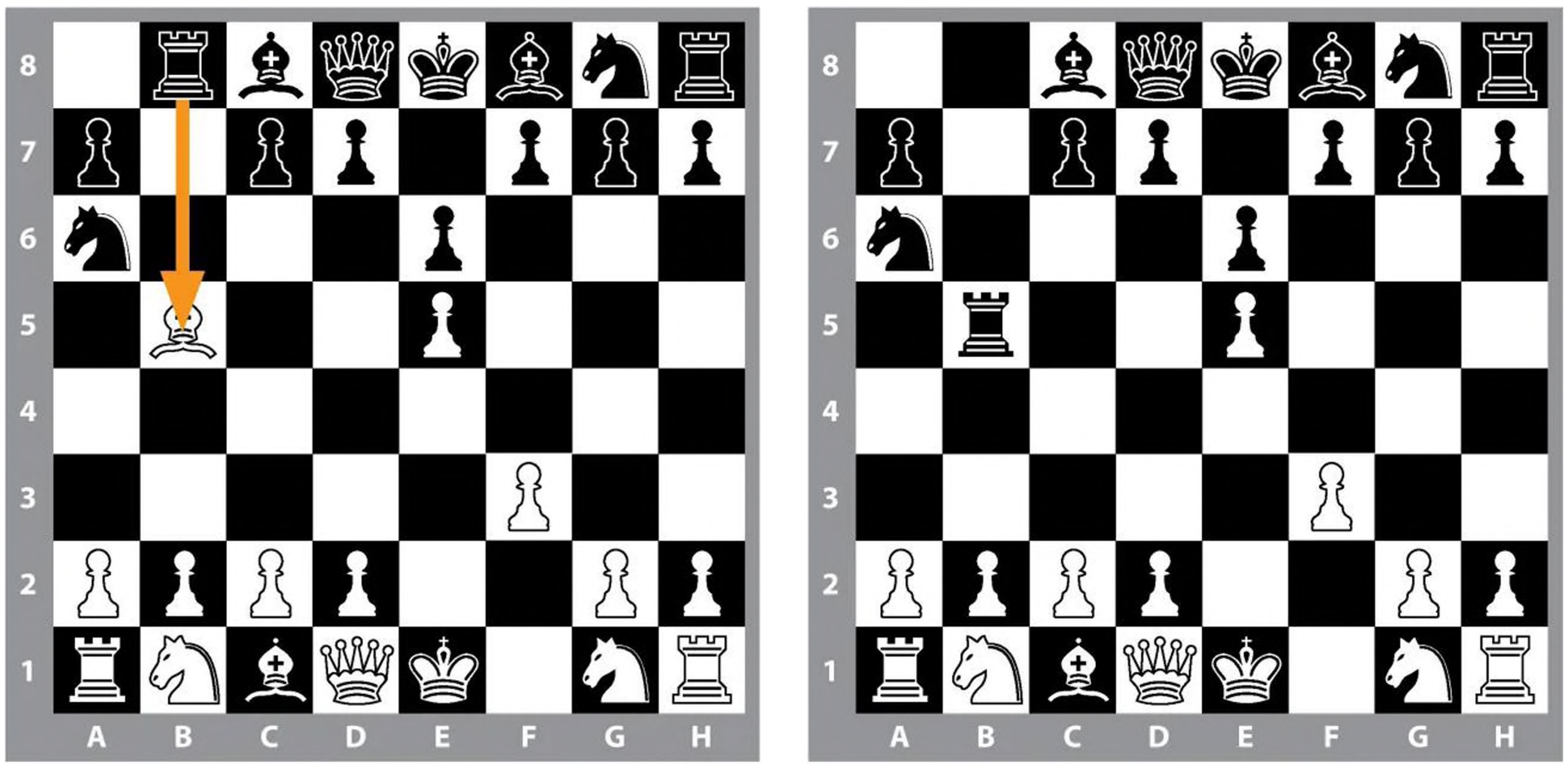




Playing the game

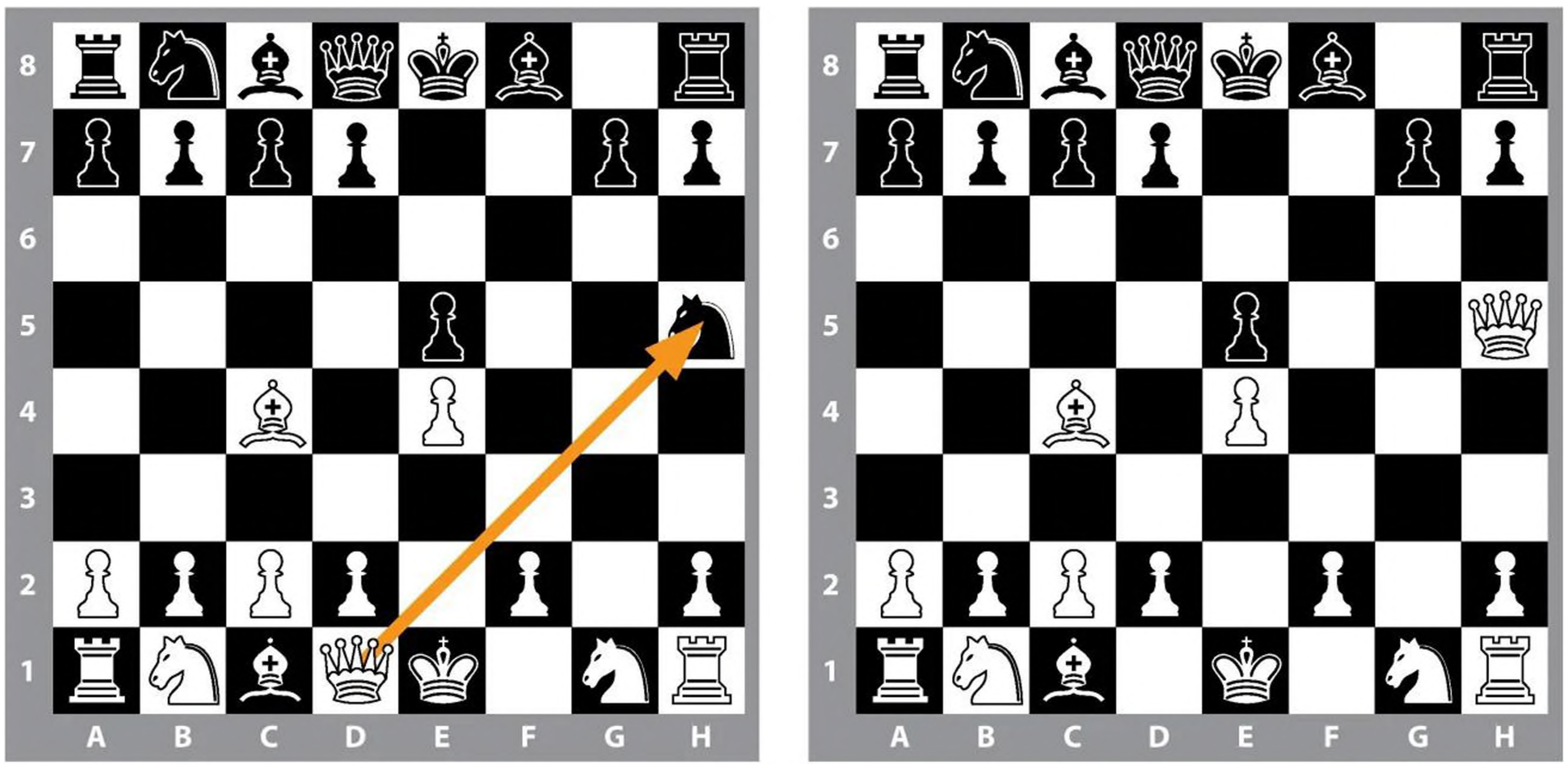
Rook

The rook is regarded as a valuable piece in chess. Towards the beginning of the game, the rooks are largely penned into their corners, but by the endgame, however, they really come into their own thanks to their reach across the board. They are also very powerful pieces for setting up checkmates. Like bishops, to take, they must have a clear run to the piece and be able to land on the square on their go.



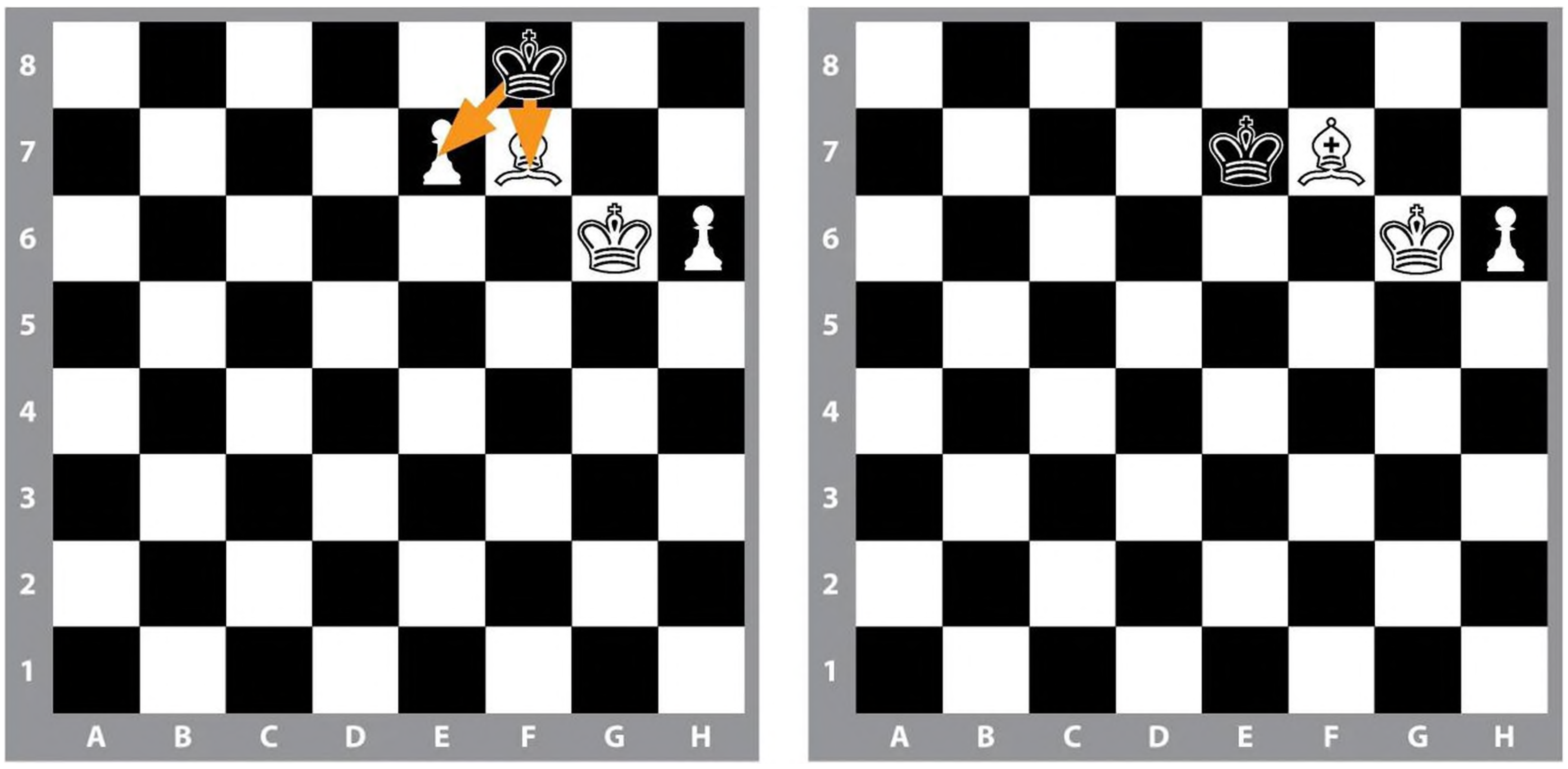
Queen

The queen is a very powerful piece and is ranked as the most valuable on the board. It can move any number of squares in any direction. It must be able to immediately land on a piece to take and cannot jump pieces. It can sometimes be used as a means to lure an opponent into a trap. It also plays a vital role in Scholar's Mate where it combines with the bishop to attack.



King

The most important piece in the game and yet for the most part it is also the weakest piece on the board. Both kings start on the rear rank and movements are limited to one space, so can only take when a piece is directly next to it. In the endgame, however, the king can play a role as an offensive piece or for defending a pawn on its way to promotion.



"The queen is a very powerful piece and is ranked as the most valuable on the board"

Check and checkmate

The aim of the game is to trap the king. Depending on your success, you will have performed a check or a checkmate

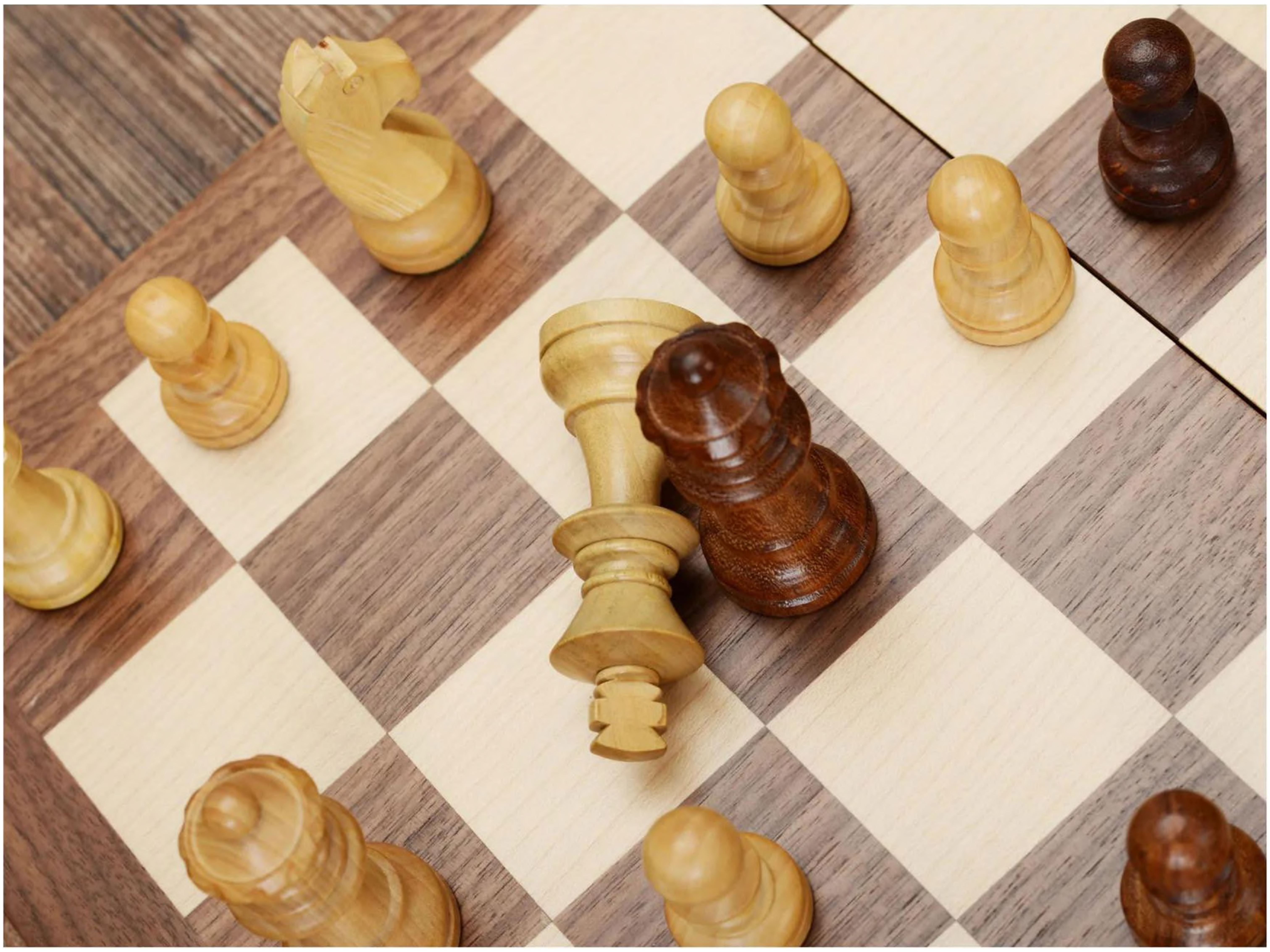
Top tip

Learn them

Try to learn as many reliable checkmate strategies as you can. You'll then be more likely to be able to set them up or spot when your opponent uses them.

If you're not familiar with chess, it's still likely that you've heard the terms 'check' and 'checkmate'. When playing chess, they are the two words that you will want to find yourself saying (as opposed to having them said to you). While sounding similar, they have quite different meanings.

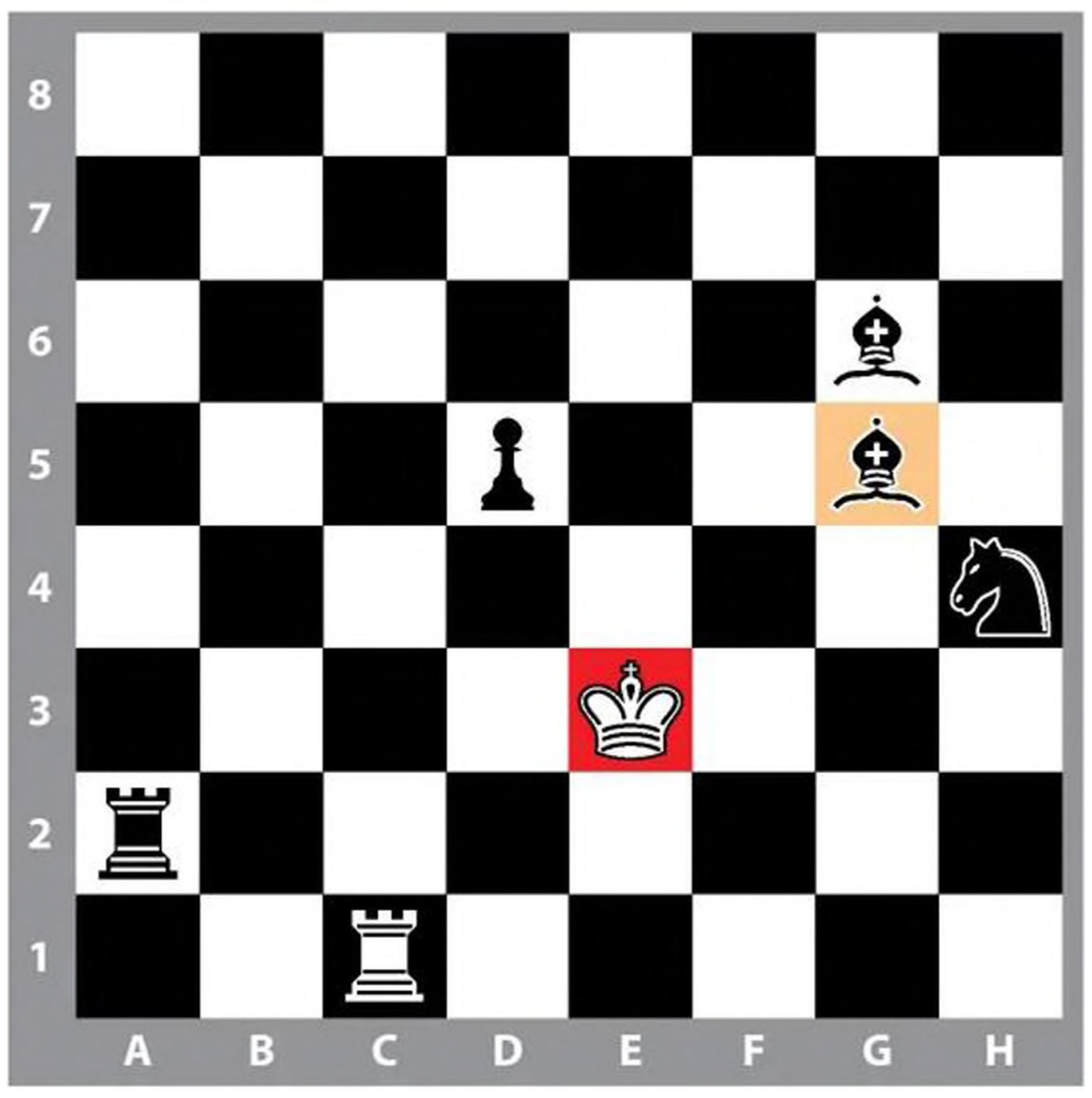
'Check' refers to a point in the game when the king is under threat from an opposing piece but is able to escape from danger. At this point, the player with the threatened king must take action to make the king safe. They are not allowed to ignore the threat and carry on playing as normal. There can be various benefits to performing a check on an opposing player. If used correctly, check can be applied as a useful tactic in attack or defence. It can force an opposing player to move their king when they do not wish to. It can also take them away from formulating their own strategies. While in check, it is also not possible for your opponent to castle their king. With the right setup, it could also form part of a two-pronged attack where a player is forced to move their king rather than look to protect another piece on the board.



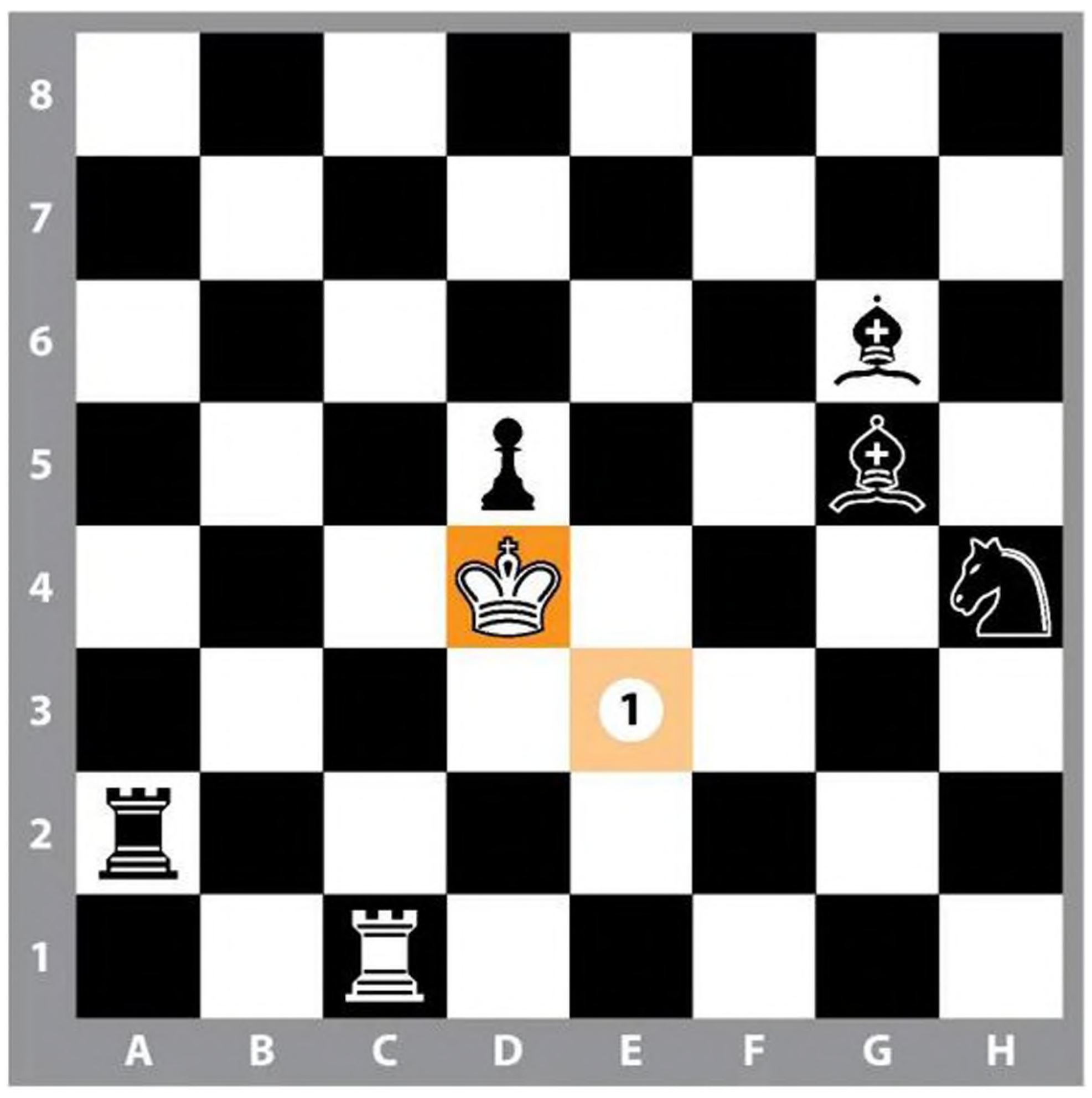
Check situations

If you're opponent calls 'check', don't panic! Here we take a look at some common check situations and how to tackle them

Move to safety

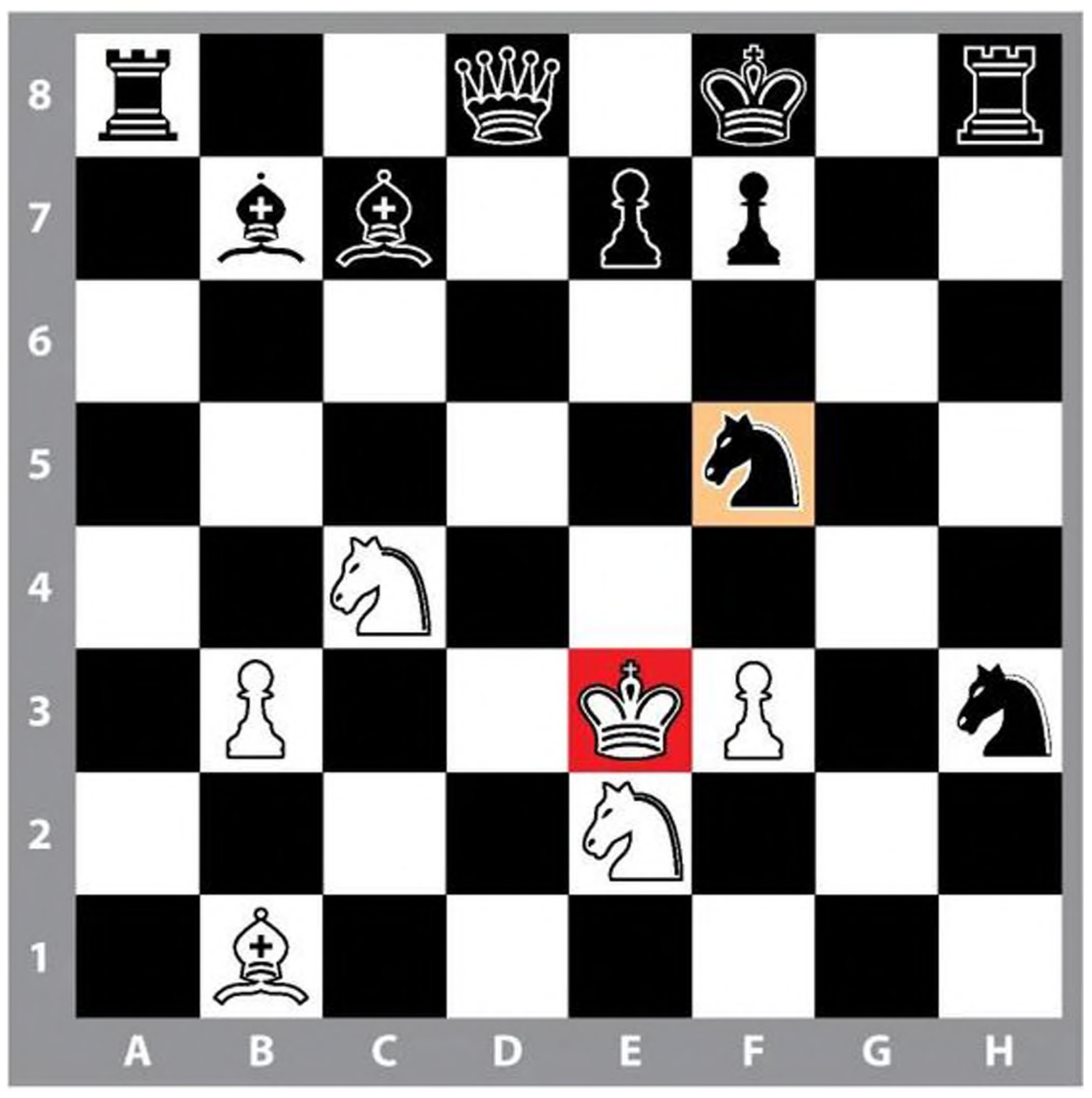


IN CHECK: The king is currently under threat from the black bishop on g5. It has a direct line to the king. The position of the king on the board means that the opposing pieces are out of reach and there are no other pieces on the board that can remove the bishop.

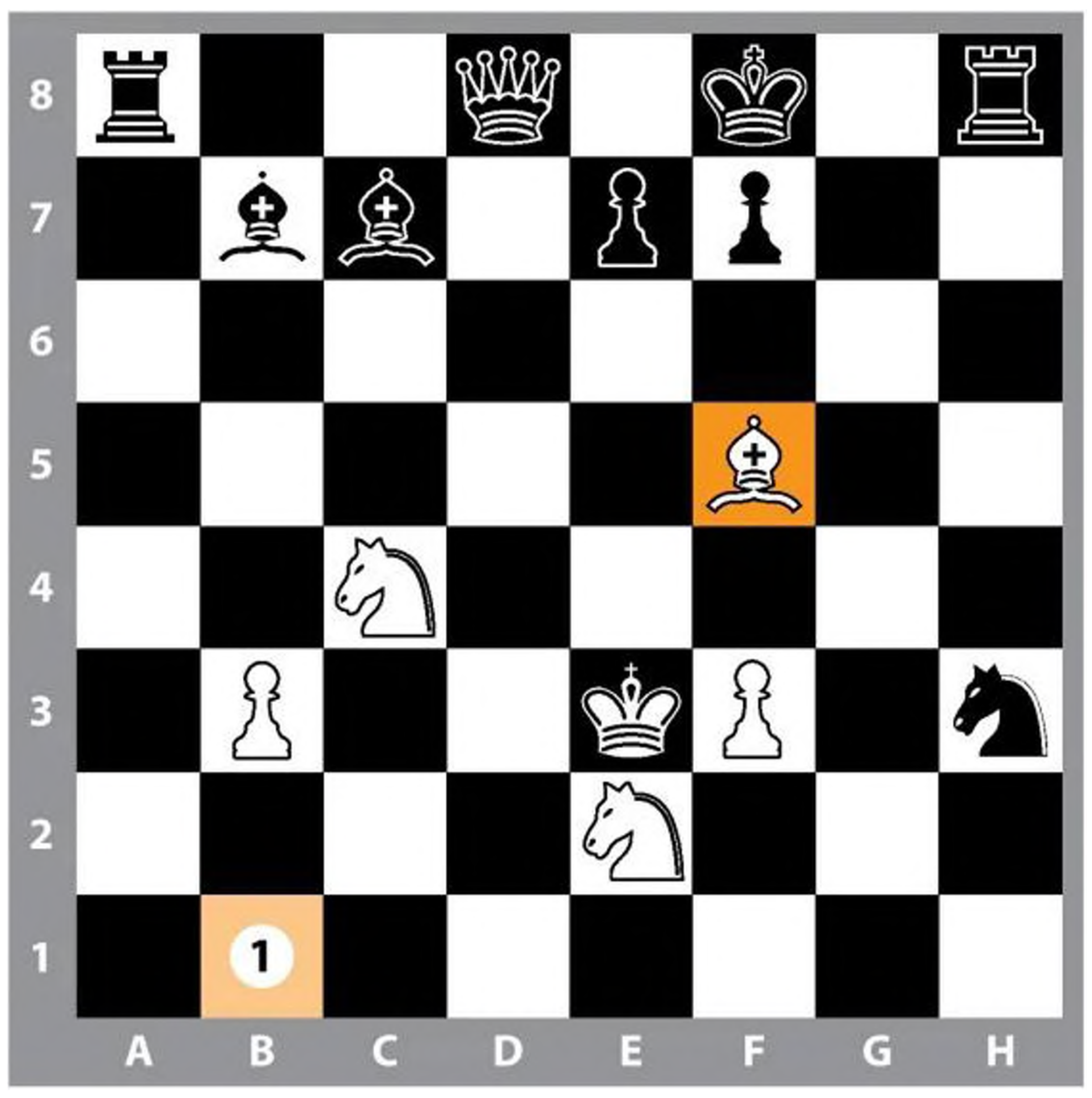


OUT OF CHECK: In this situation the king(1) needs to move to a space that won't put it under further threat. Here the choices are limited, the only safe space being d4. It's also important to remember that when under check, the king is not allowed to castle in order to escape.

Capture

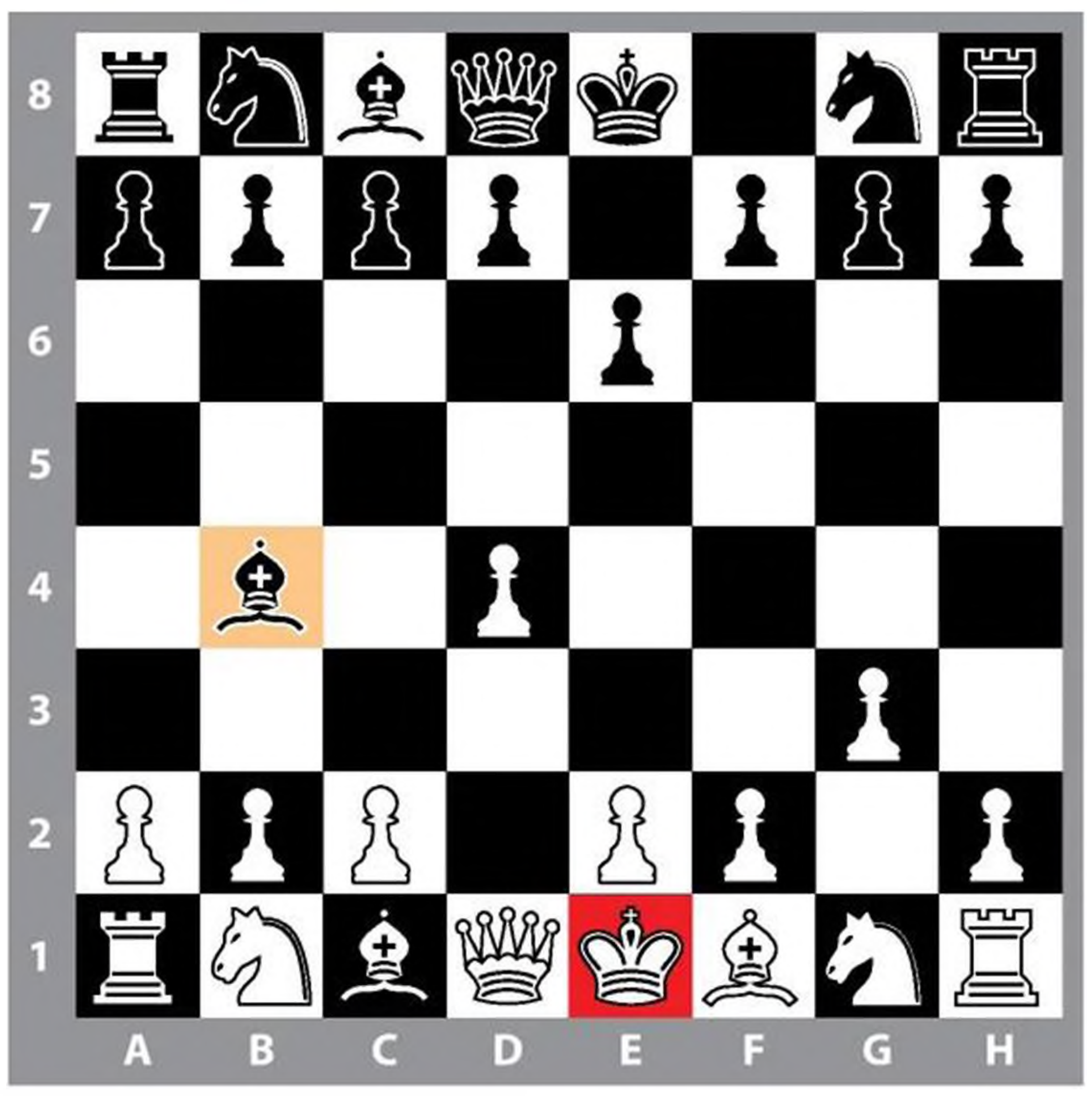


IN CHECK: The Black knight at f5 has the white king in check. On some occasions a piece can block the line of fire. This is not possible, however, when a knight is presenting the check (as it can jump pieces). As a result, the white pawn at f3 is not able to block.

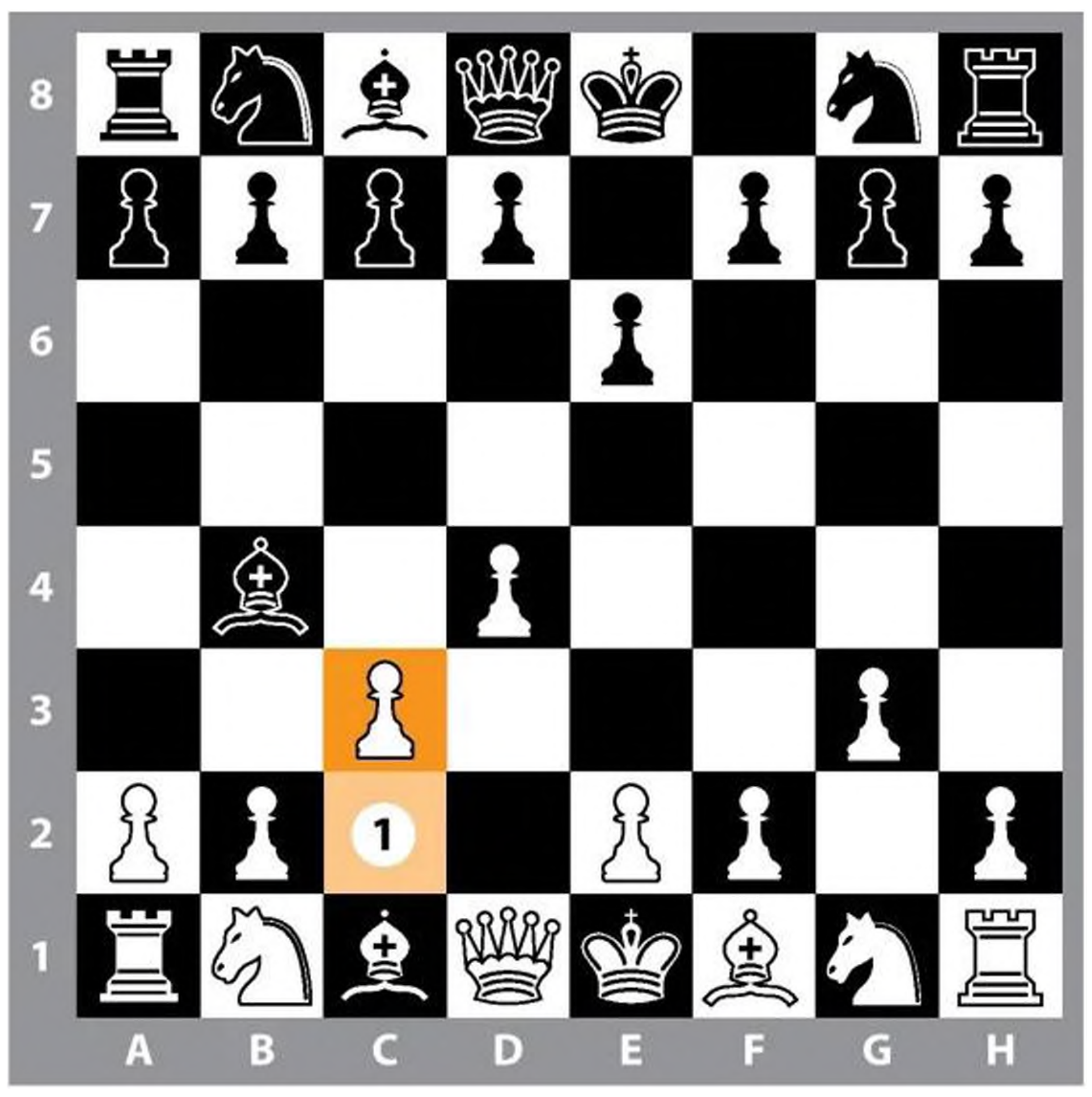


OUT OF CHECK: The king can't move to safety. The black queen has the d line covered while the bishops and knights make it impossible for the king to move. The white bishop(1), however, can move from b1 to f5. In the process, the black knight is removed from play.

Blocking



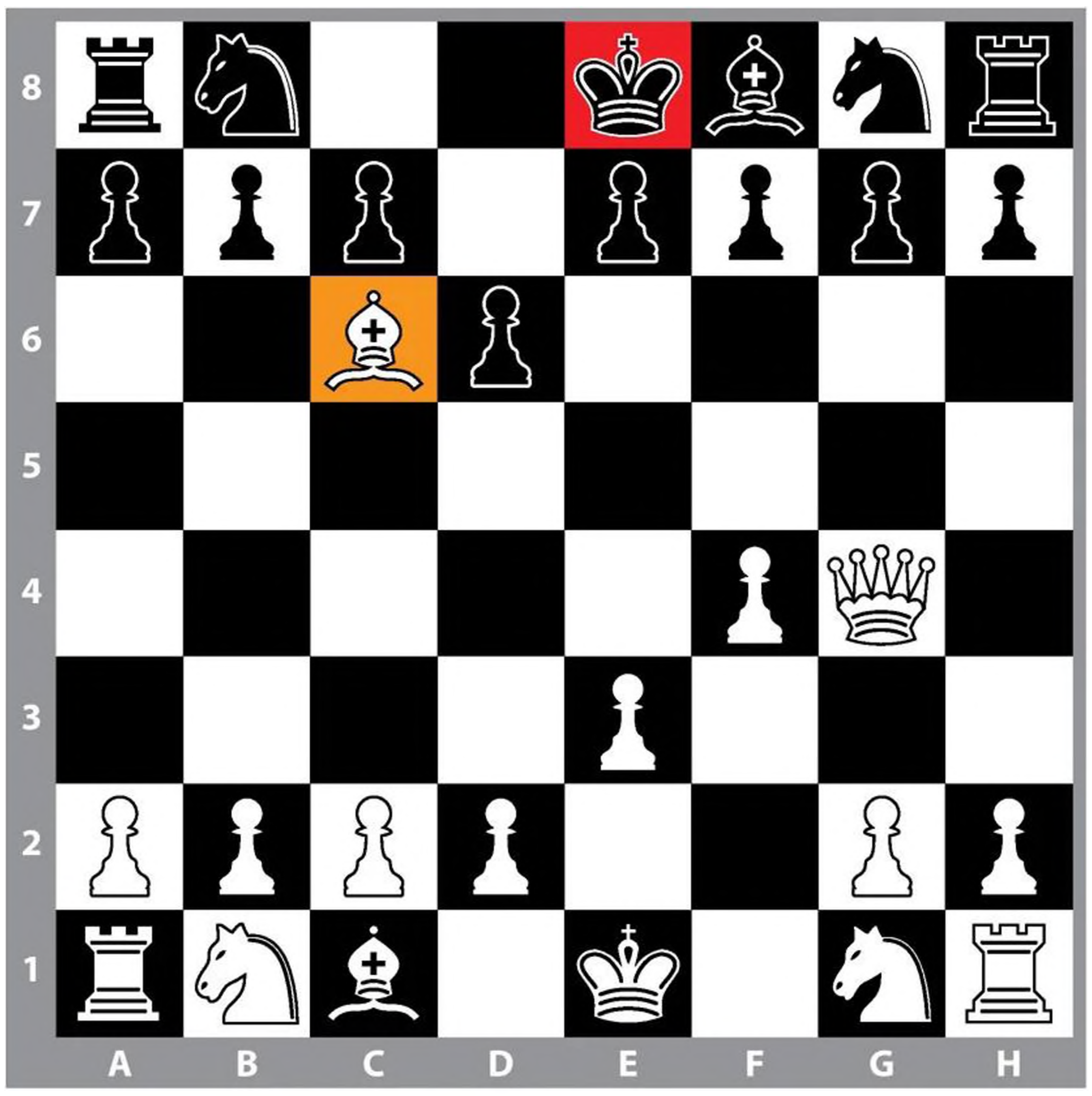
IN CHECK: The black bishop has pushed forward to b4 and placed the white king in check. The white king is mostly pinned in by its surrounding pieces, which limits movement. The only available empty space does not free it from the bishop's line of sight.



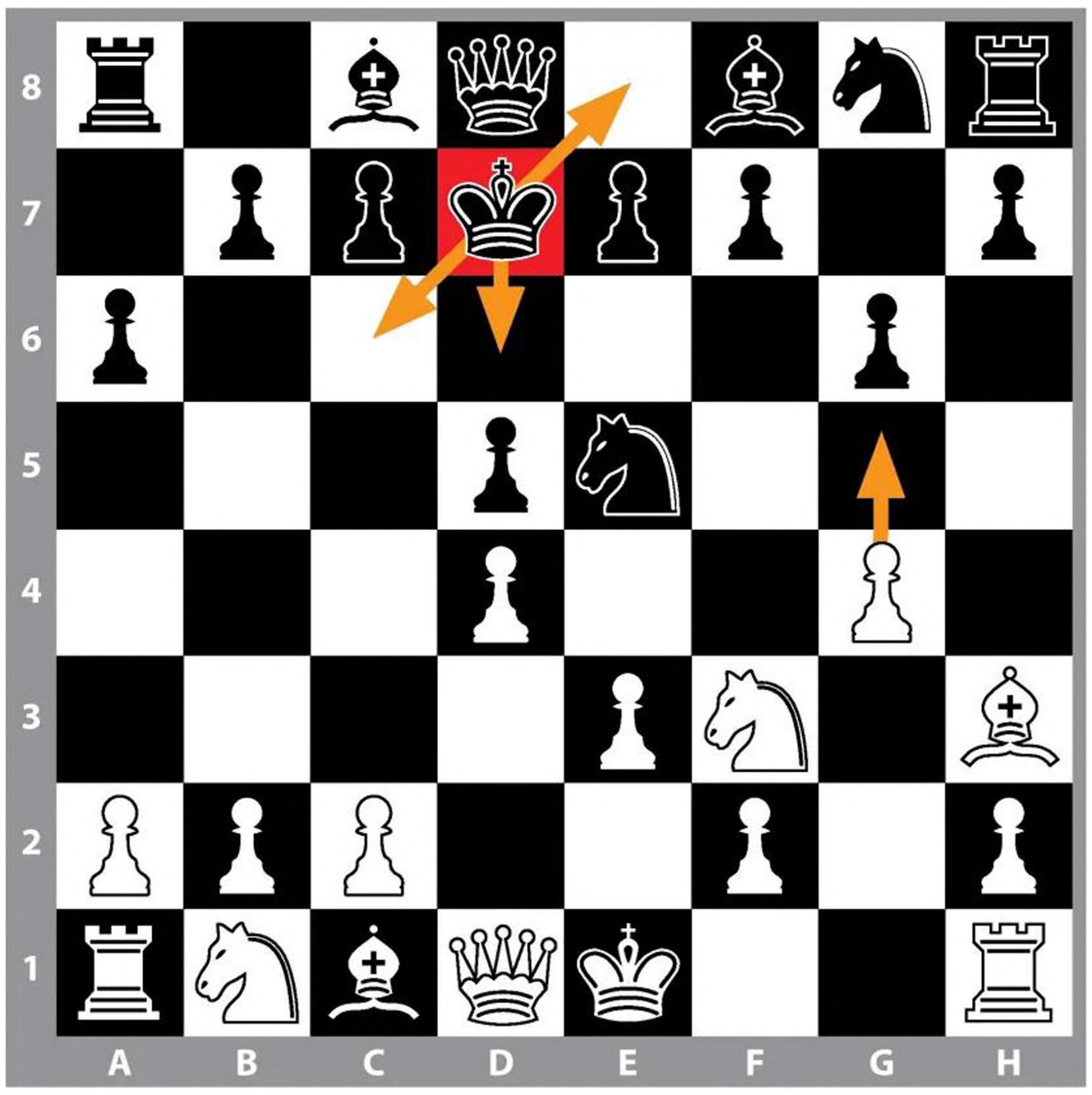
OUT OF CHECK: You could use the white queen or bishop to block the black bishop, but this would put those pieces at risk. By placing the white pawn(1) on c3, the black bishop is blocked. Should it choose to take the pawn, it risks getting captured by the pawn at b2.

Types of check

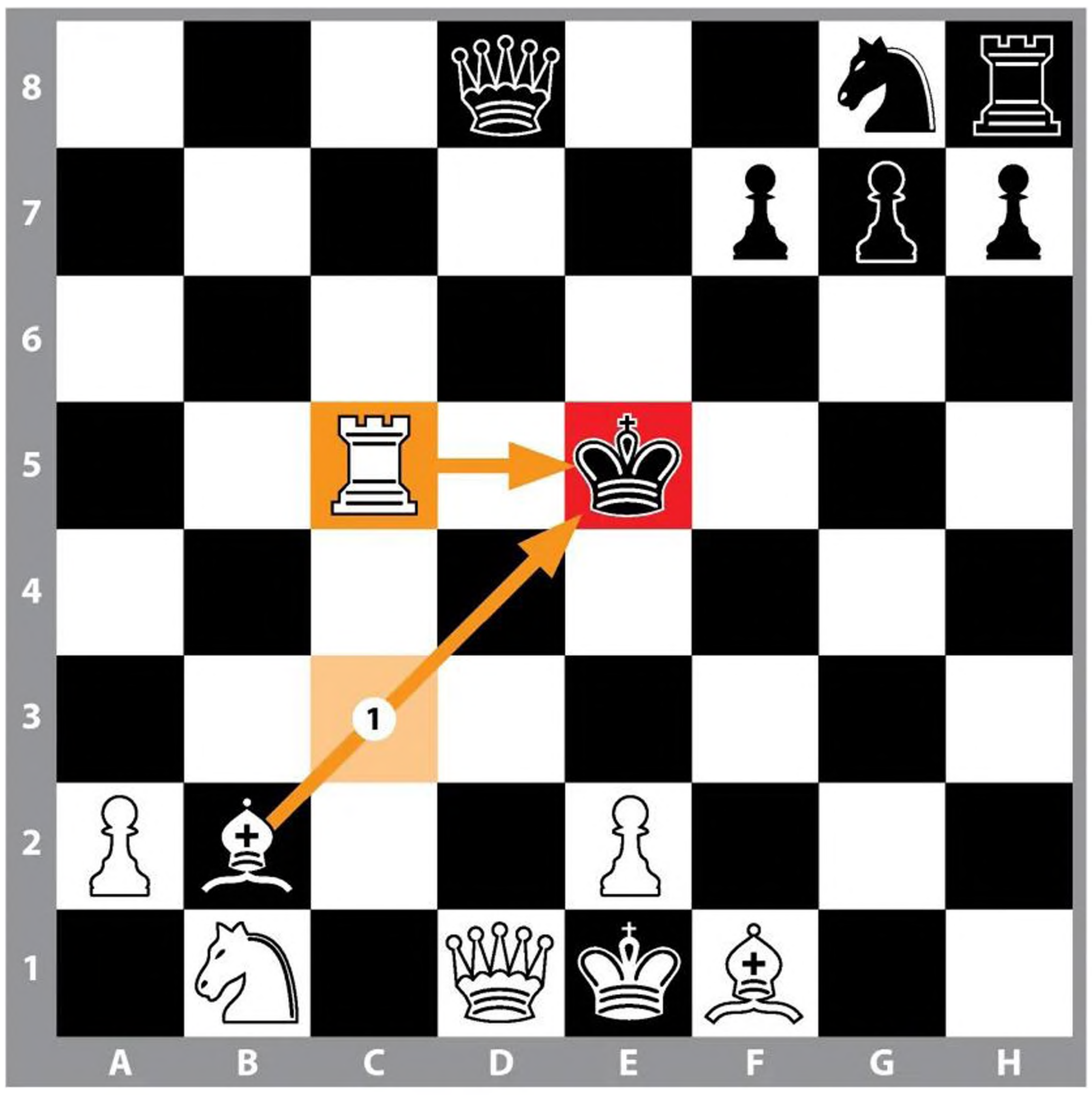
There is more than one way for a check on the king to reveal itself – sometimes it can occur when a piece is moved out of the path of an attacker



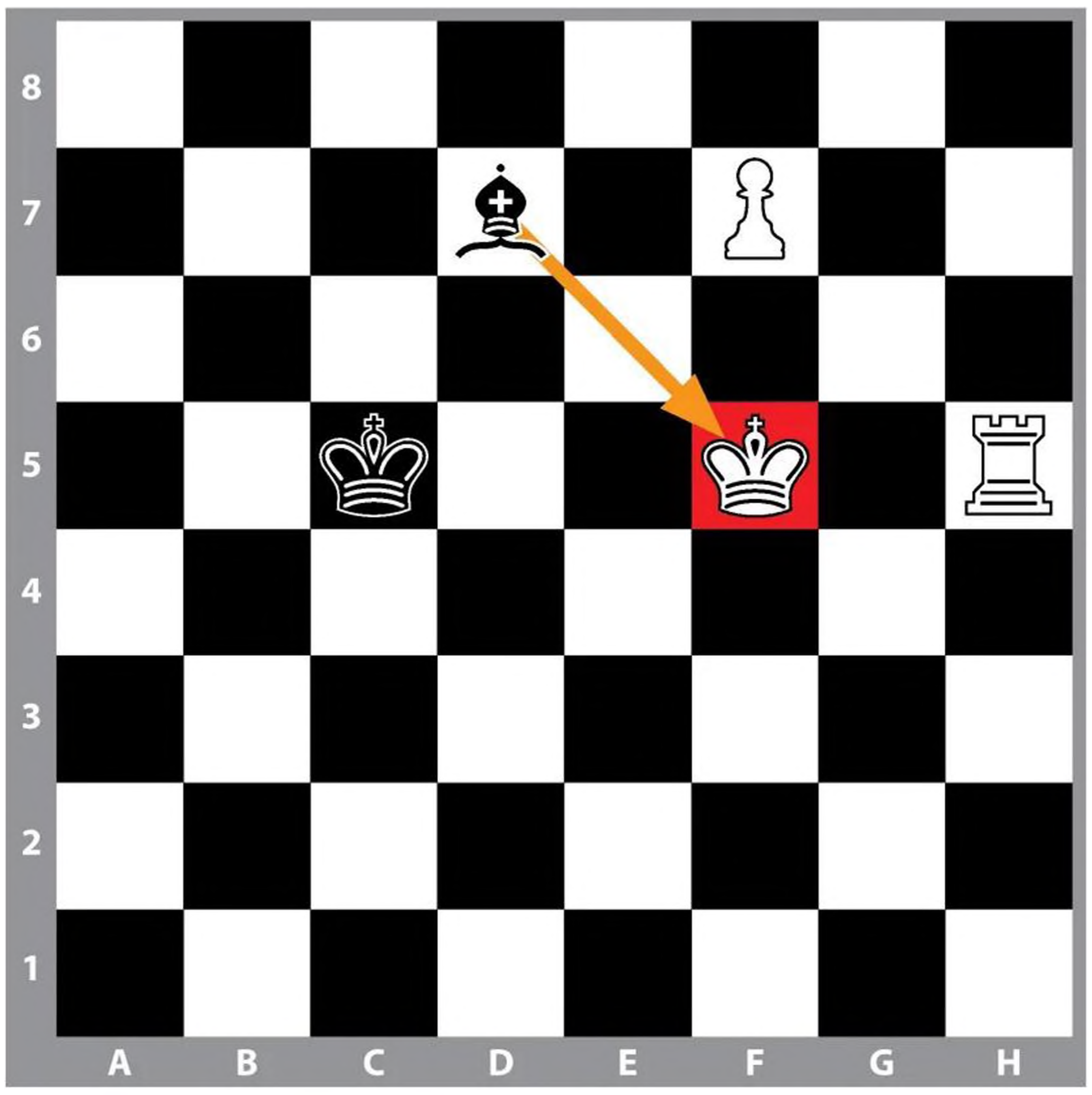
01: Simple check A basic check is when a piece deliberately moves to place the king under threat. This piece may be working on its own rather than being part of a tactic.



02: Discovered check This occurs when a piece is moved to 'reveal' a check on the king (eg white pawn to g5). The king has to move and cannot save the black knight at d4.



03: Double check This is when a piece makes a move on the opposing king resulting in a discovered check in the process. The white rook(1) moving to c5 will achieve this.



04: Cross-check This occurs when a check is answered by another check. Here the black bishop has the king in check. When the king moves, the white rook checks the black king.

Checkmate

When there is no way to protect the king from an attack, it's checkmate and the game is over, but setting up a checkmate isn't usually easy

Checkmate is the ultimate goal of any chess match. It occurs when the king is in check and there is no way to formulate an escape. This means that there is no safe square to move to, capture the threatening piece or block the attack from it. In chess the king is never actually captured or removed from the board: the game ends as soon as a checkmate becomes apparent. A checkmate can be delivered by any piece on the board apart from the opposing king. This would not be possible as the kings would not be able to get close enough to each other without putting themselves in check.

In professional games between advanced players, checkmates are less common. This is due to players at a higher level resigning before putting themselves in a position to suffer a checkmate.

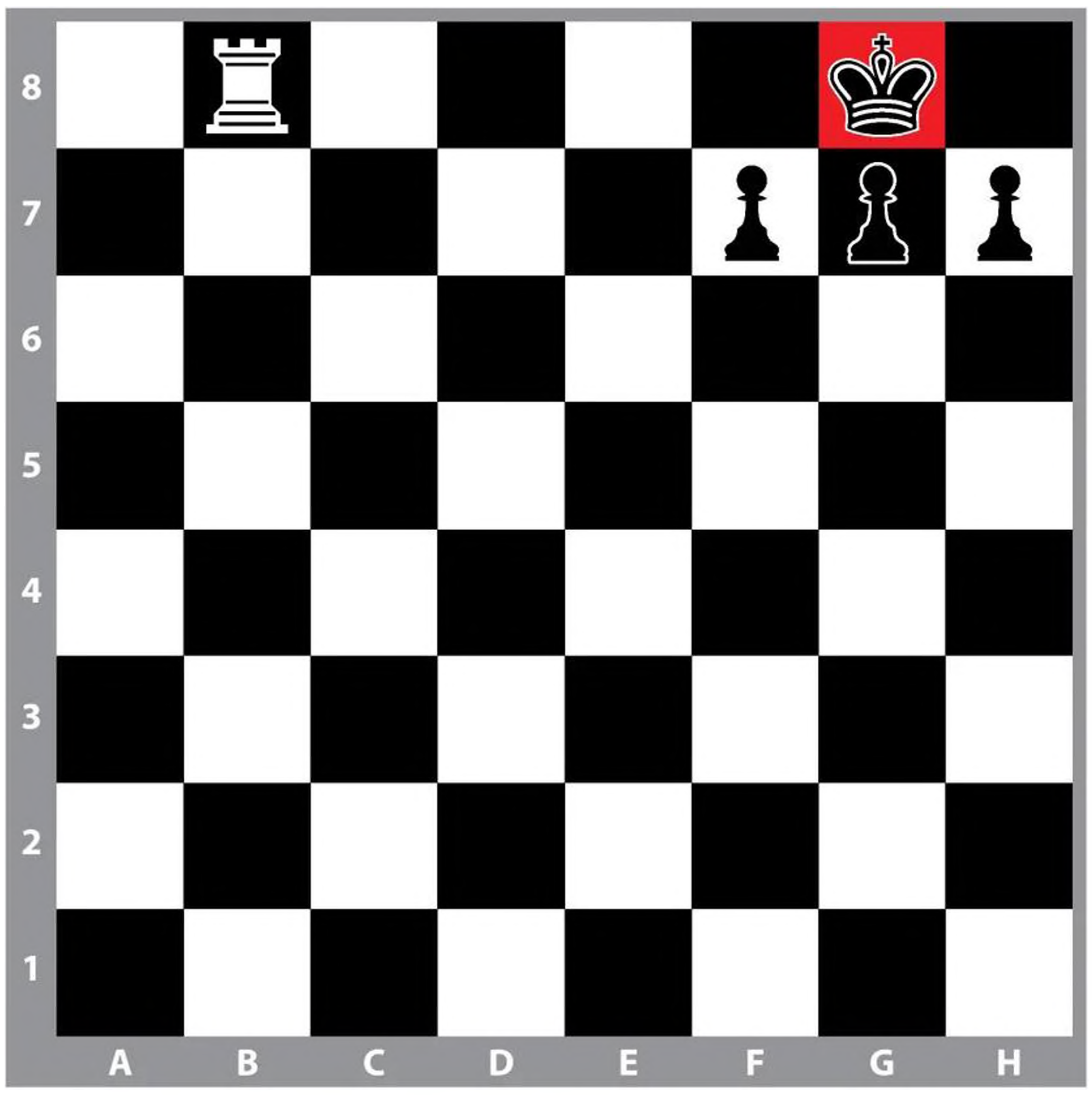
Getting a checkmate is not easy. If you're pushing an offensive front to obtain checkmate, it's important not to leave your own king unguarded. It's also important that when going for a checkmate you do not end up chasing the king around the board. This can lead the game into a draw (known as a stalemate) which is a preferred ending for a disadvantage player.

Skilled players have been known to set up a checkmate and literally steer the king's sequential moves into an inevitable checkmate. Part of becoming an experienced player is learning how to set up plays such as this. There are a number of recognised checkmate setups that, once studied, can help to boost your repertoire for your future chess matches. Some involve trapping the king in a tight space; others have two pieces forcing pressure in order to secure victory.

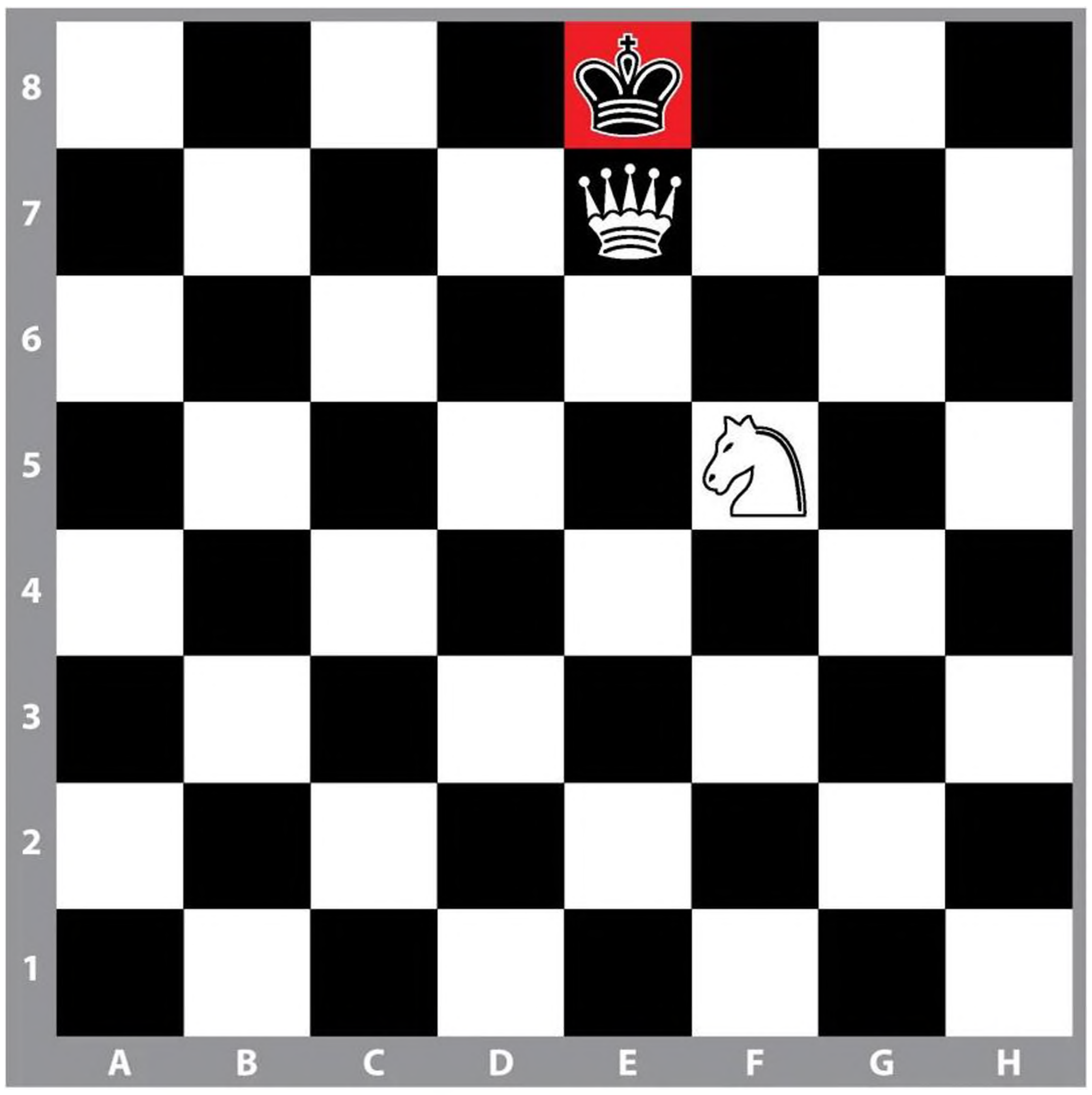
"The king is never actually captured or removed from the board"

Different types of checkmate

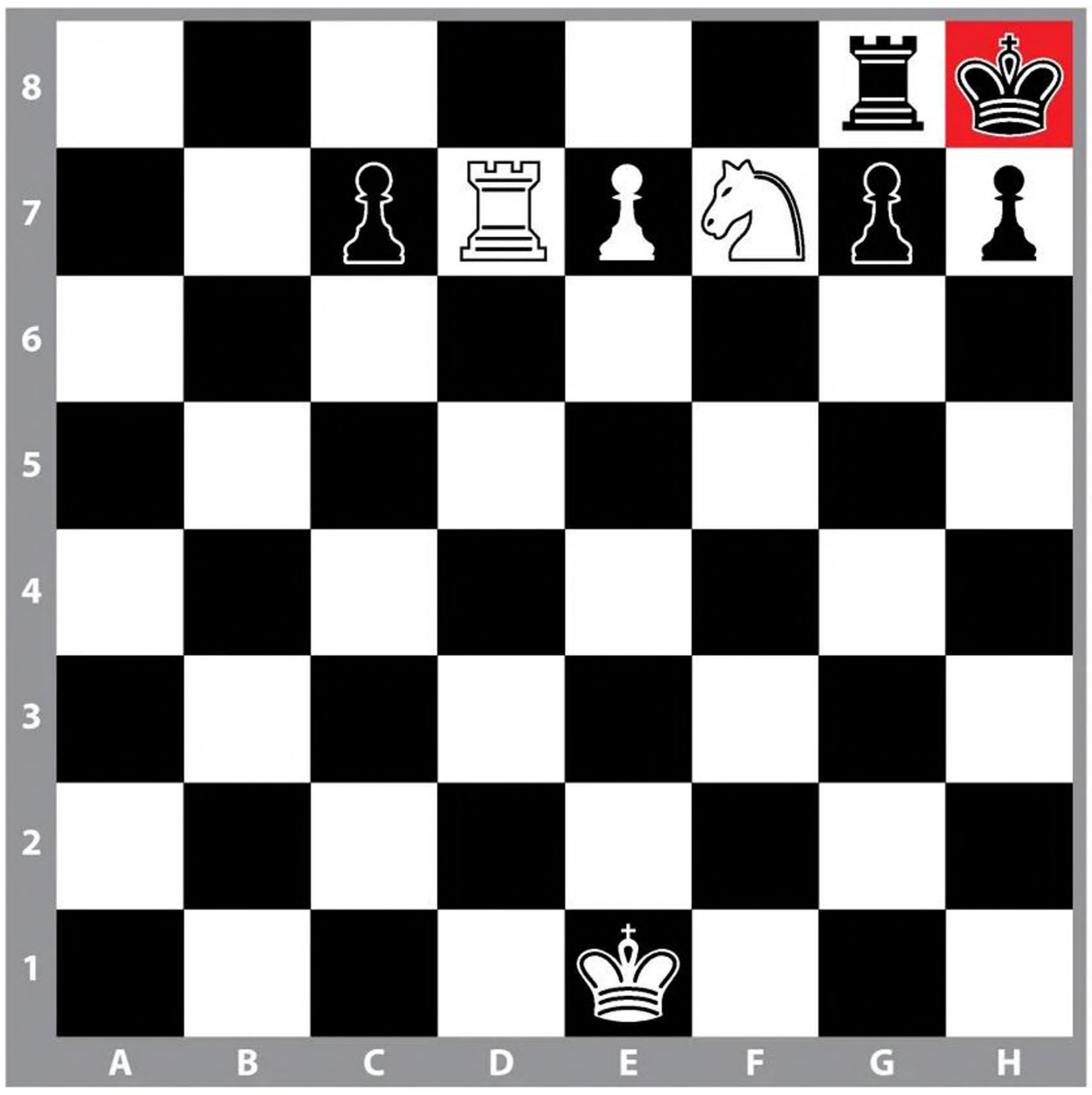
There are various ways of setting up a checkmate position to win the game. Here we take a look at some of the more common types



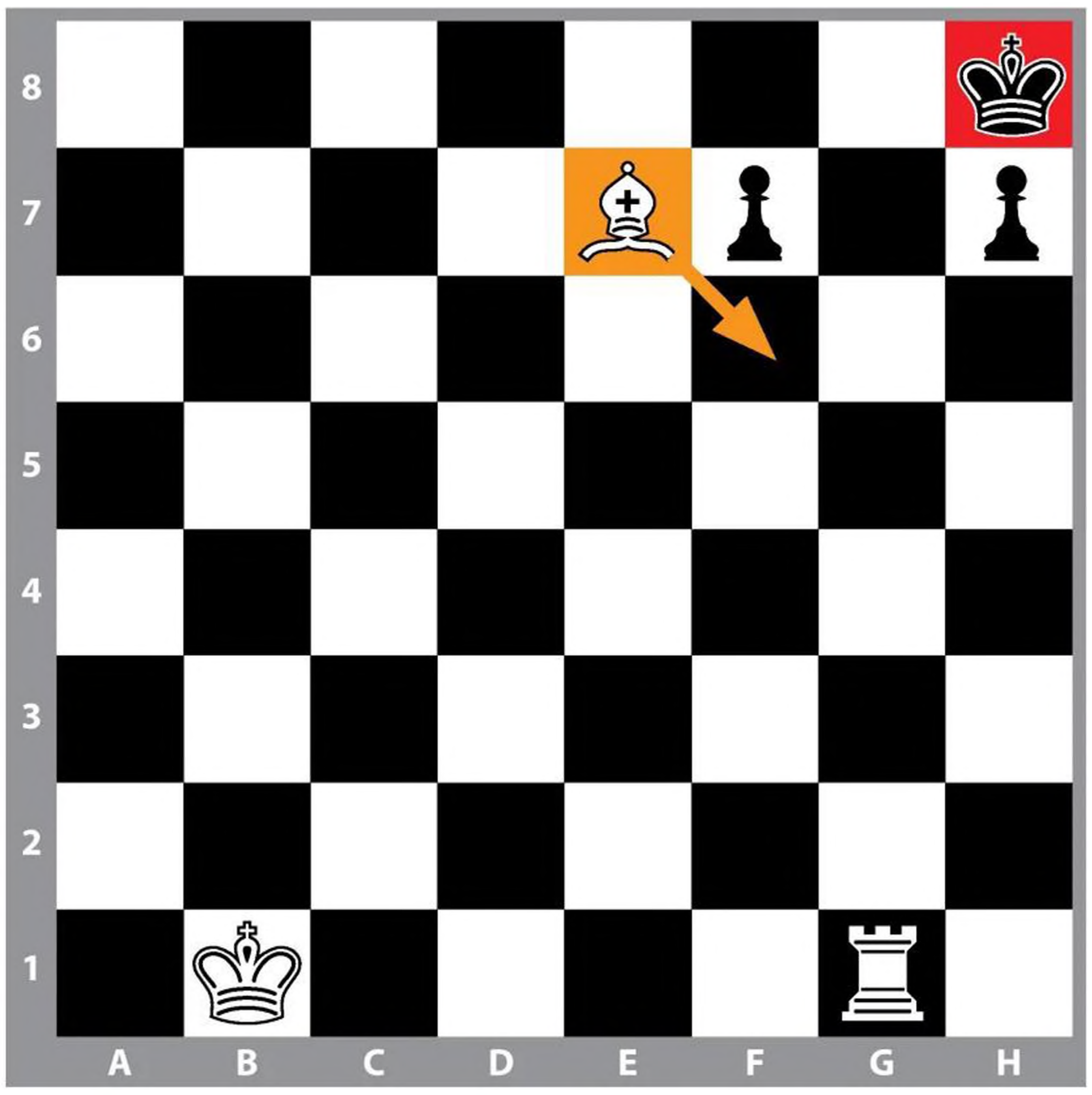
01: Back-rank mate This is usually delivered by the rook or queen along a back rank (ie the far row). The king cannot move forward as it is blocked by its own pieces.



02: Support checkmate There are checkmates where the queen is supported by a minor piece. Here the queen has moved to e6 to trap the king, while protected by the knight.



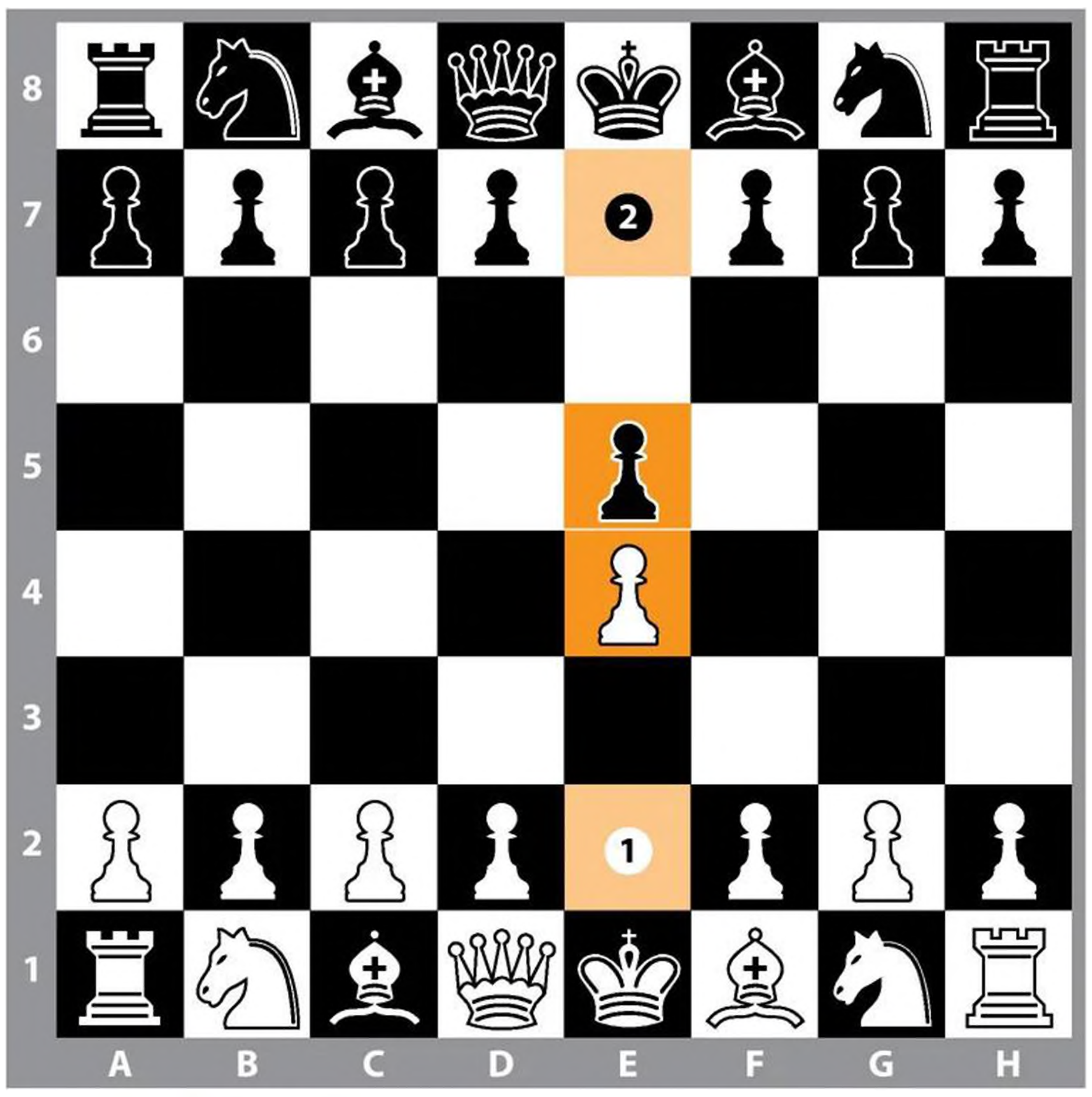
03: Smothered A smothered checkmate is delivered by a knight where the mated king is blocked by its own surrounding pieces. Normally these appear in the board corners.



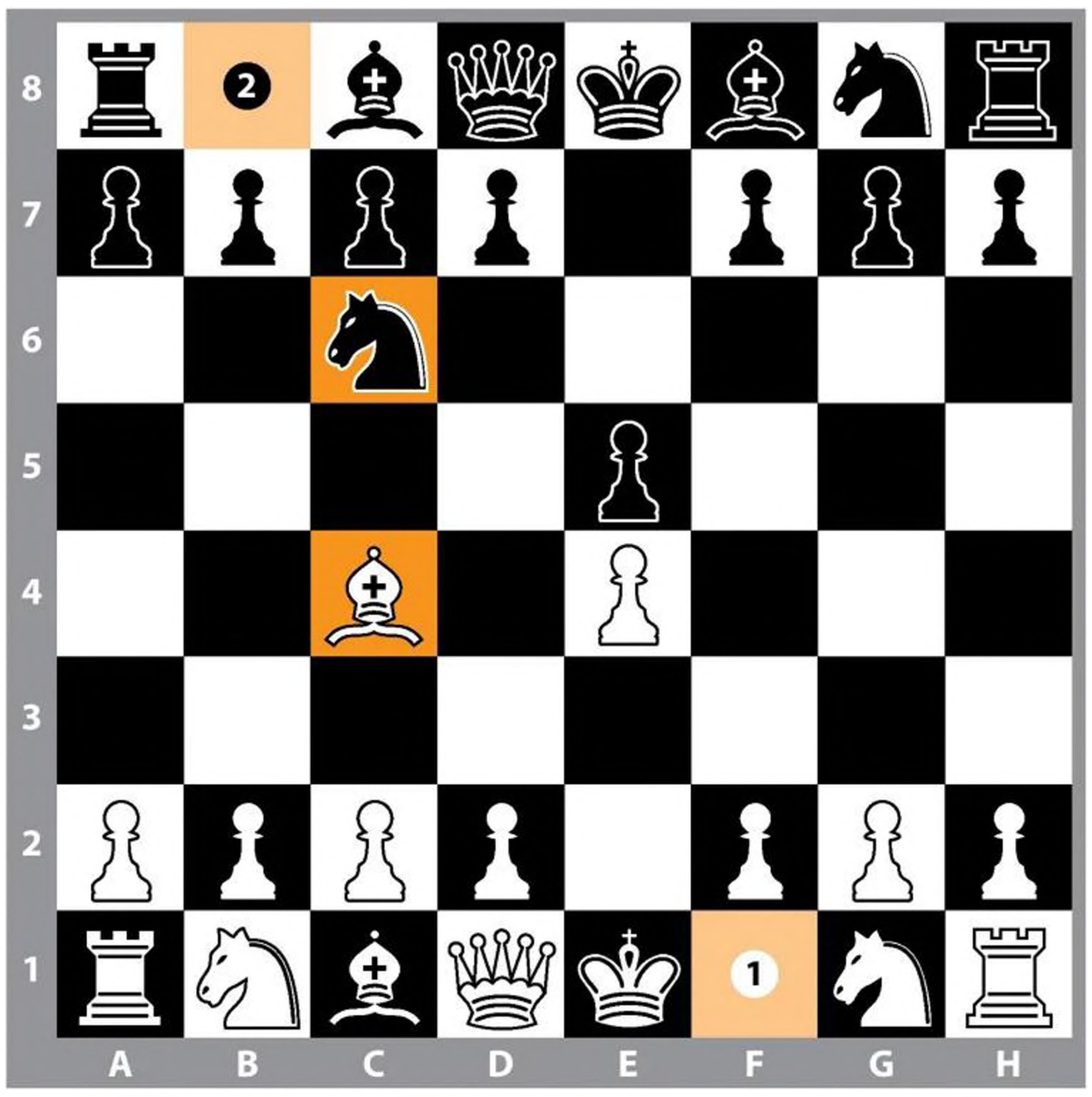
04: Morphy's mate Named after US master Paul Morphy, this involves the bishop and rook working together to trap the king. Here the white bishop can force checkmate.

Scholar's mate

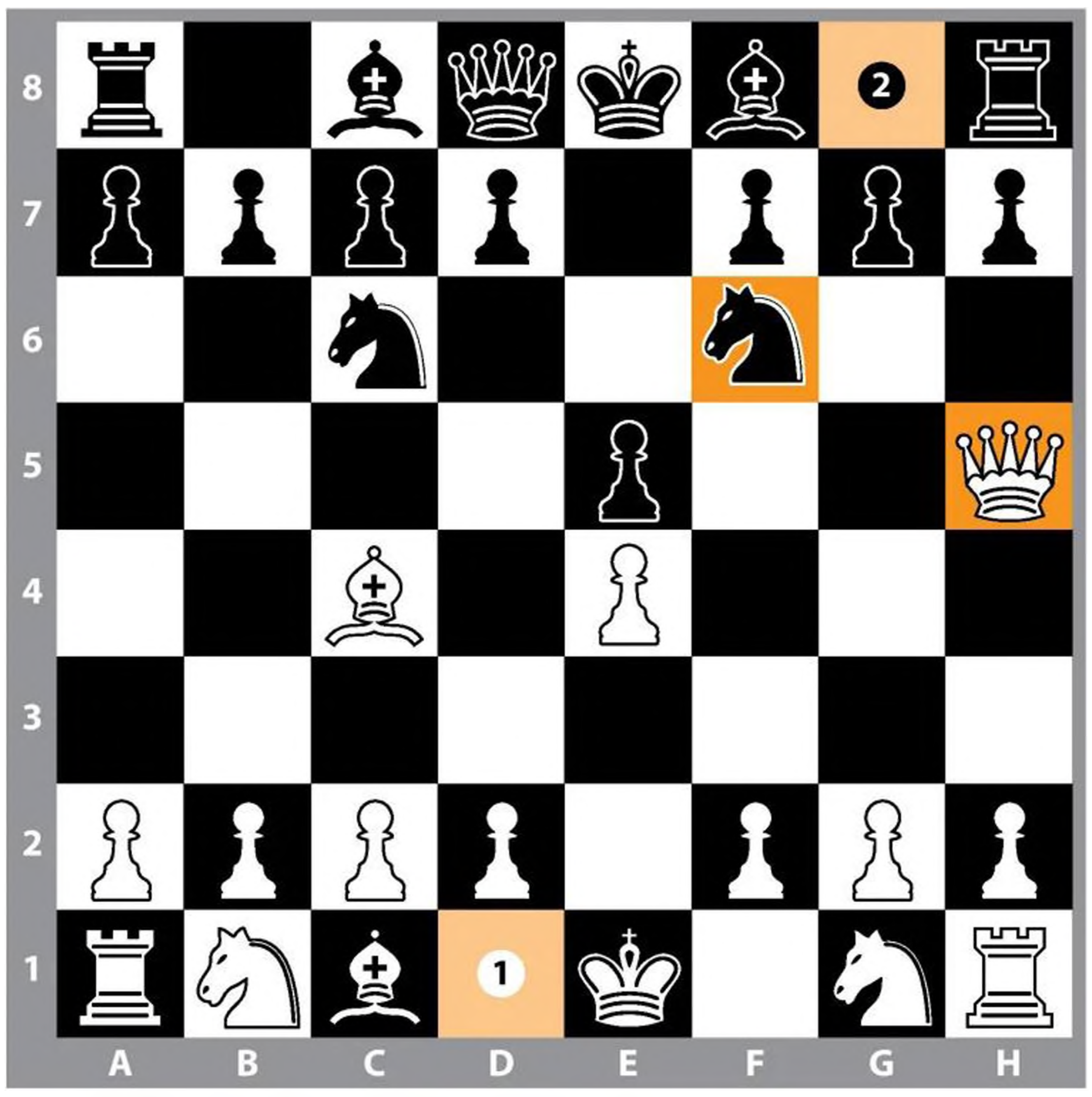
Defensive mistakes can bring a quick end to the game in this situation, so pay attention if you don't want to get caught out by it



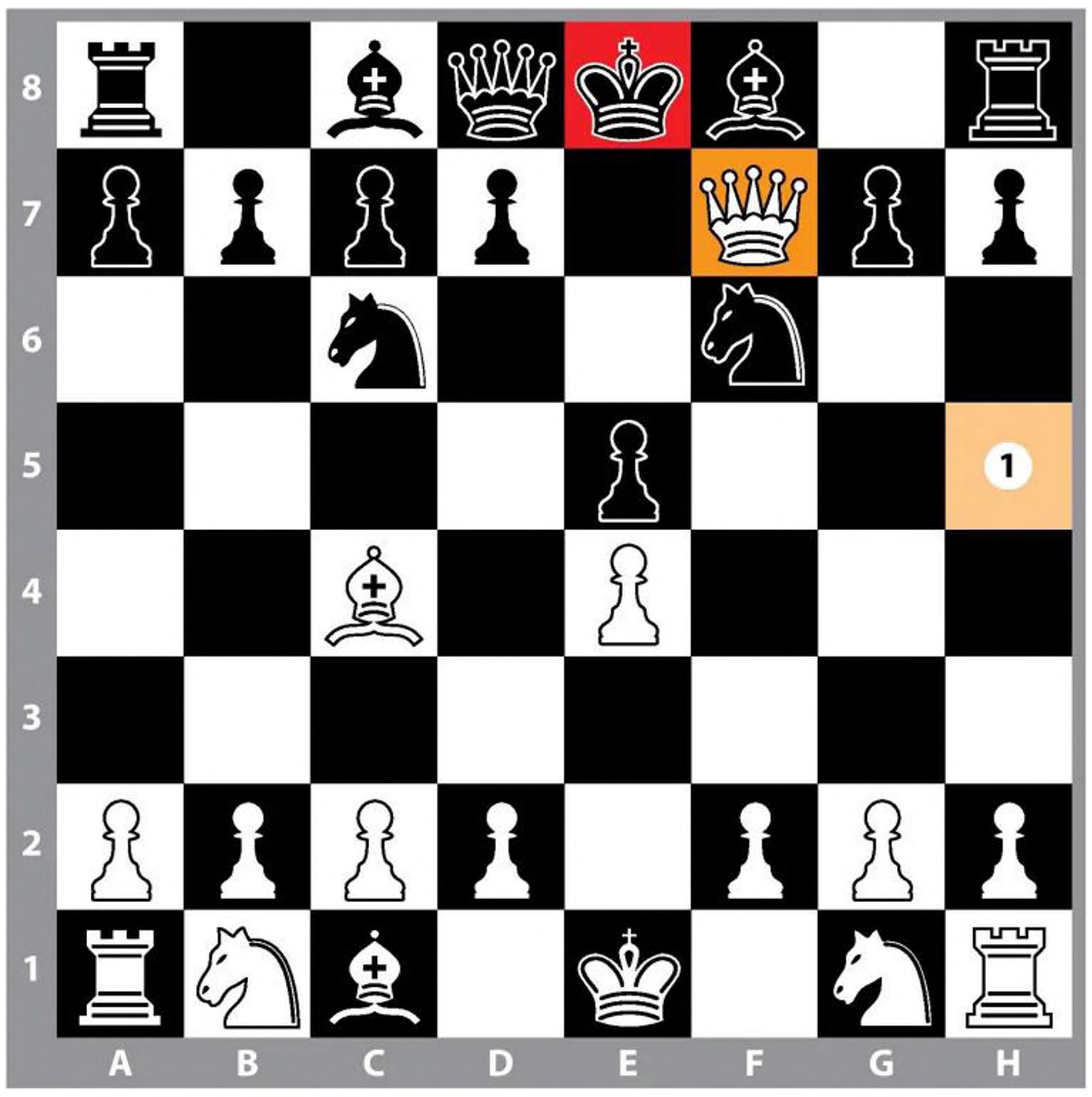
01: Scholar's mate Also known as the 'four-move checkmate', the Scholar's mate combines the queen and bishop to attack on f7 and checkmate in the process. To begin with, both white(1) and black(2) move their e pawns out two spaces to meet in the centre of the board.



02: Bishop advances White's initial move has opened up room for the queen and bishop to advance. Firstly, the bishop(1) moves to c4. This puts it on a diagonal line straight to the pawn at f7 but out of reach of black. Sensing the bishop threat, black would likely develop his knight(2) to c6.



03: Queen advances The white queen now moves out to h5. It's the beginning of the end! The white queen(1) is now along a diagonal line with both the pawn at f7 along with the king directly behind it. Not sensing the attack on the f7 square, black is likely to move his knight(2) to f6 to threaten the queen.



04: Checkmate The black knight's threat on the white queen(1) is no good – it can happily advance to f7 and take the pawn. The king behind it is now under threat as a result. It cannot move to e7 nor can it capture the queen thanks to the white bishop offering protection all the way from c4.

Gambits

Learn how to apply riskier plays and sacrifices in order to throw off your opponent and gain a more advantageous position

When playing chess, you may think that it's generally a good idea to capture as many opposing pieces as you can. In fact, sometimes it can be more beneficial to sacrifice a piece in order to achieve an upper hand. For example, you may wish to gain an advantageous position early in the game. In chess this is known as a gambit. In most cases it is a pawn that is the sacrificed piece and white that starts the gambit. When black initiates a gambit, it is sometimes known as a 'countergambit'.

When a gambit is in play, it is said to be 'offered' to the opponent, at which point it is either 'accepted' or 'declined'. It is not a formal declaration as such, nor is it announced. It's simply a matter of whether the opposing player chooses to take the bait. If the offered player captures the piece, the gambit is termed as accepted. On the other hand, if the offered player chooses to ignore the gambit in favour of continuing their own objectives, then the gambit is termed as declined.

There are many gambits that can be played and each has multiple variations therein. Some are said to be more 'sound' than others. In real terms this means whether they will give the offering player opportunity to place pieces in areas of the board that would otherwise be inaccessible. That and whether the accepting player suffers from a loss such as a decentralising of their pieces.

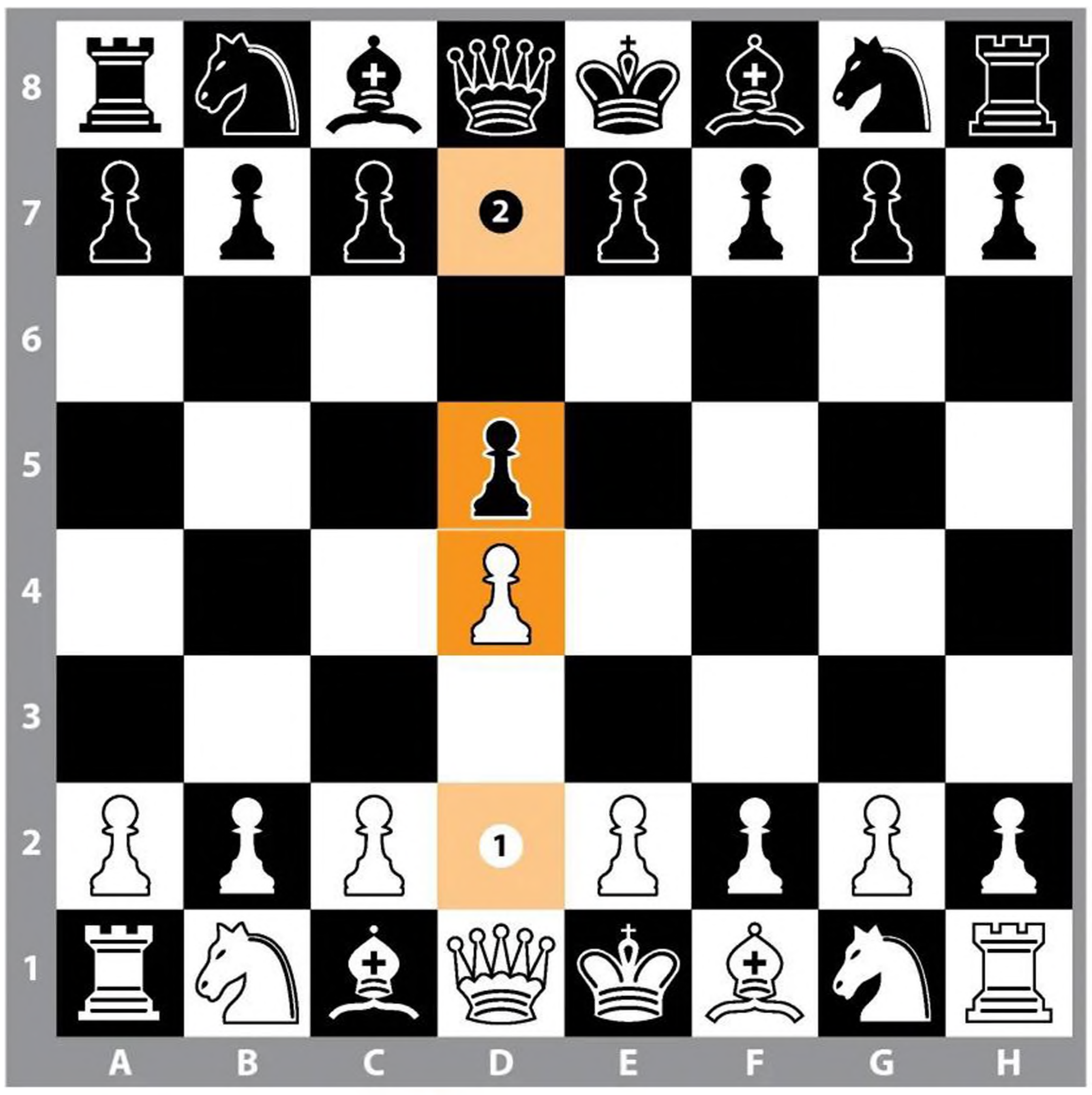
In general, most gambits occur within the first five to ten moves of a chess game. If used right, they can be fun to employ as they throw a curveball into proceedings while stepping up the speed and intensity of a game.

> "They can be fun to employ as they throw a curveball into proceedings"

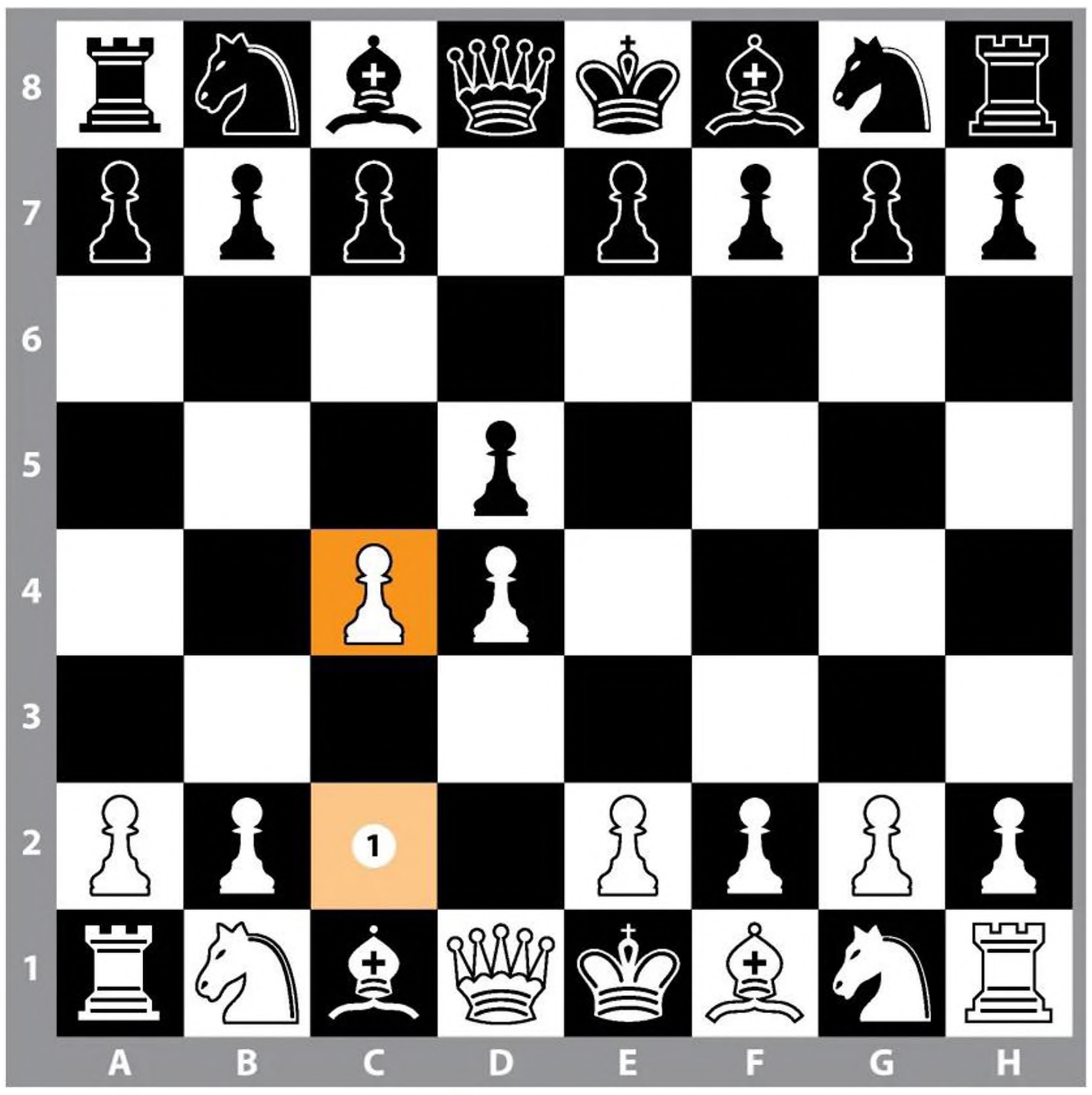
Top tip

An ulterior motive

Take care not to be on the receiving end of a gambit. You may well be tempted to take a pawn during the opening of a game, but be aware of what piece you are moving and what is left exposed once it moves.



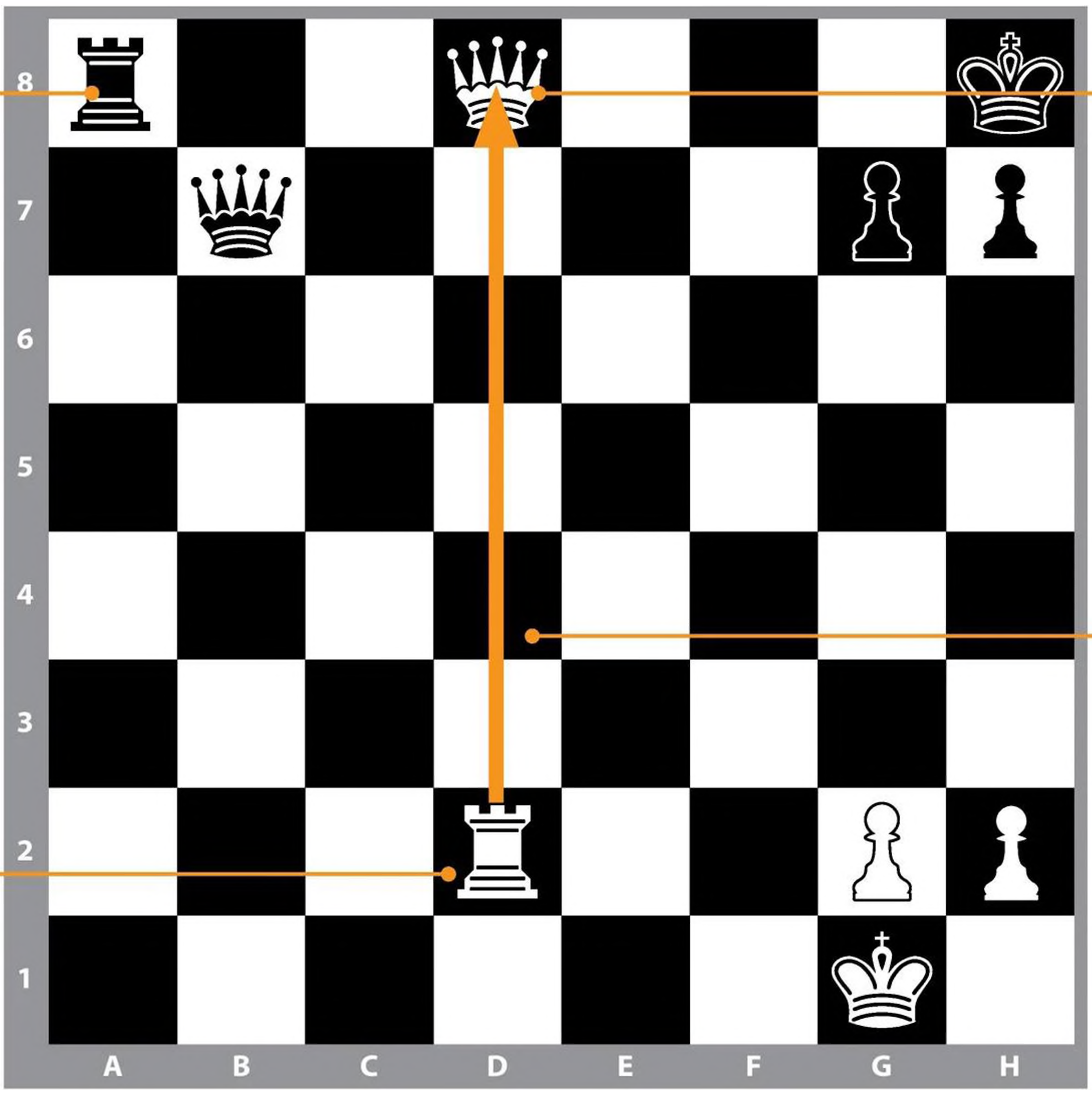
01: The Queen's Gambit This is said to be a very sound gambit. White opens by moving their pawn(1) to d4. Black responds in similar fashion by moving their pawn(2) to d5.



02: Set the gambit White now sets the gambit in play by moving their white pawn(1) to c4. By doing this they are offering black a chance to capture the pawn by moving to c4.

Queen sacrifice

A basic example

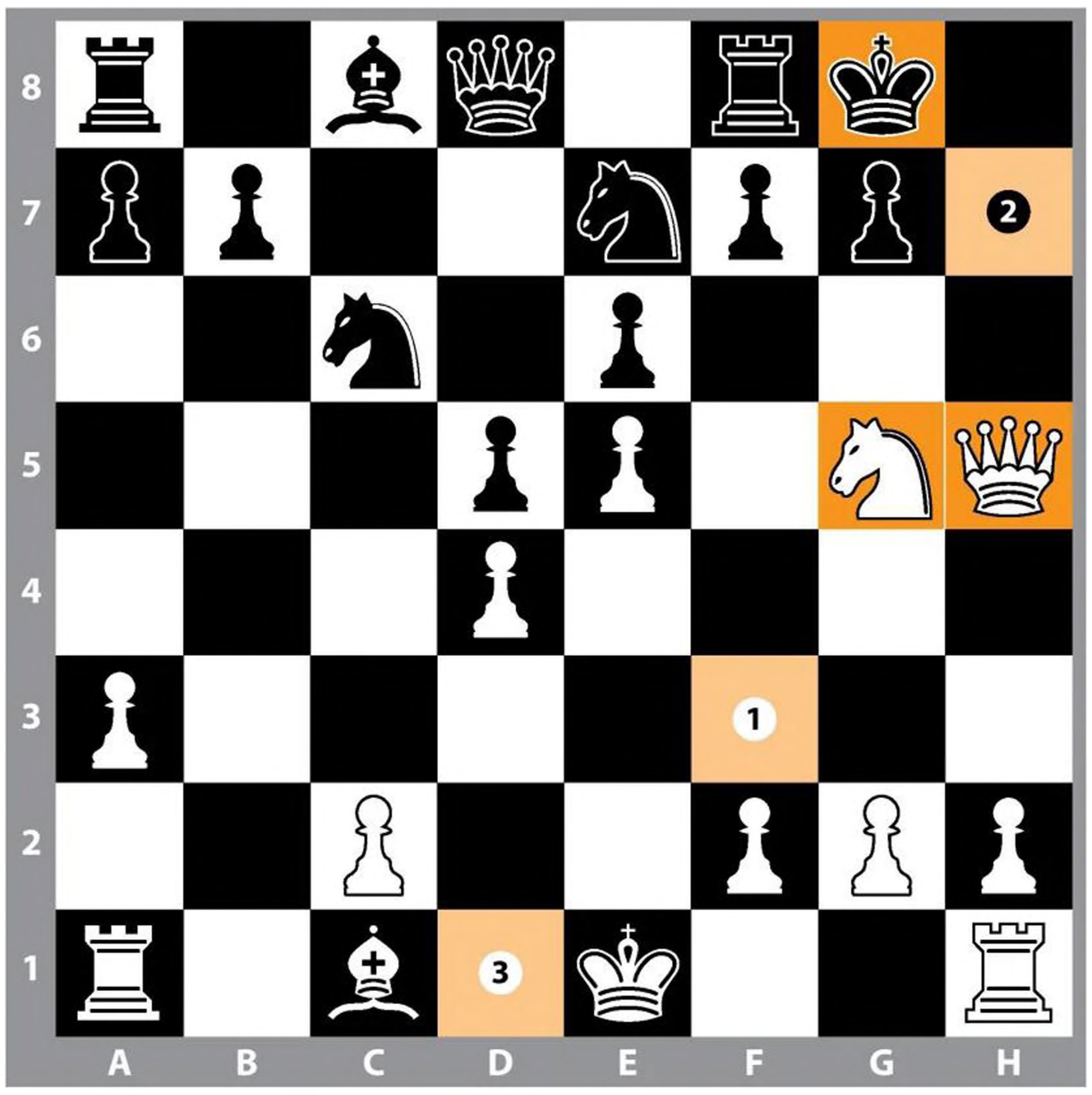


1. The queen offered
The white queen has moved up the board from d4 to d8. It is now under threat from the black rook at a8. Will black take the sacrifice?

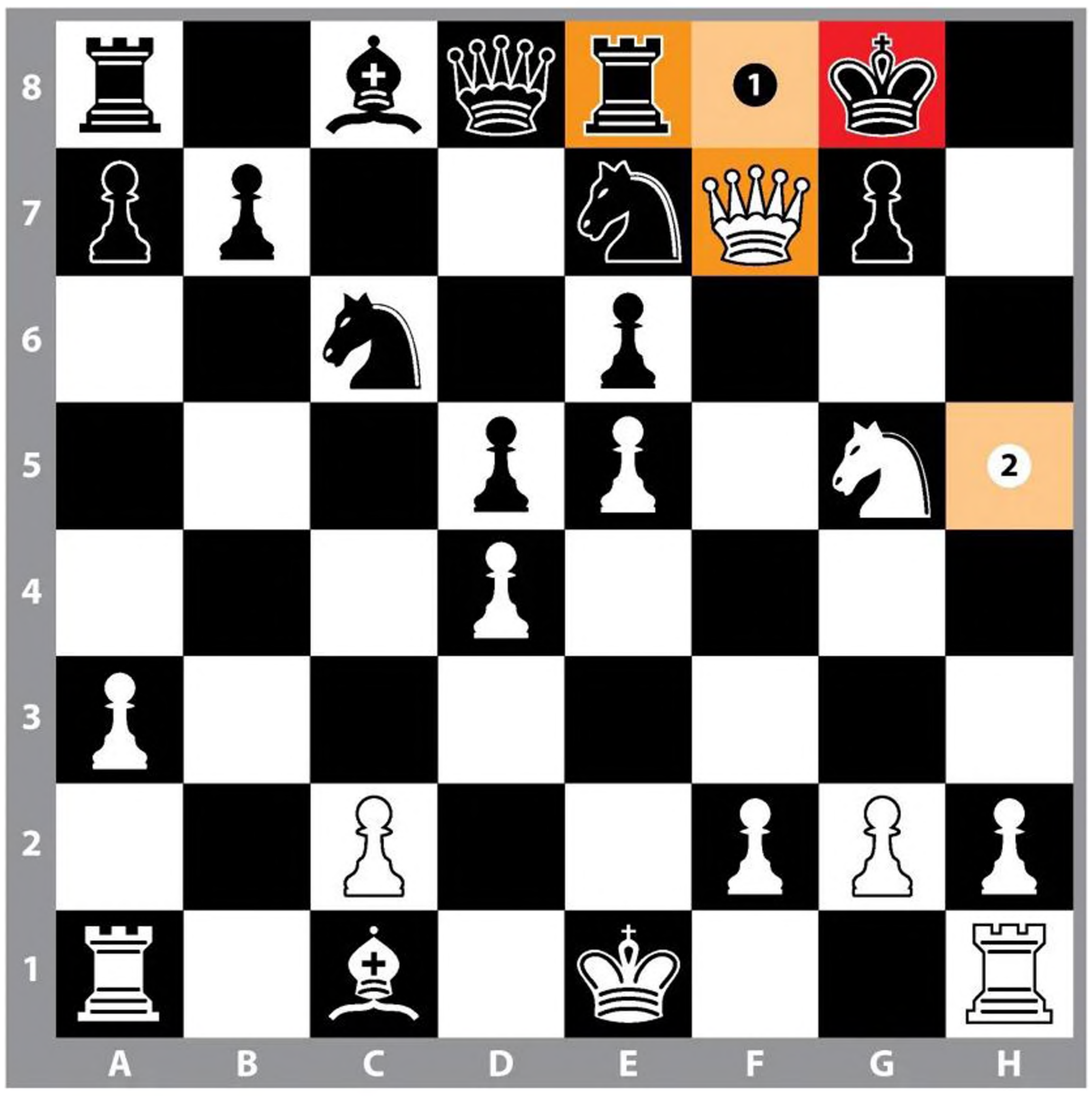
2. Rook takes queen
In the next move, the rook would likely take the queen at d8. In other words, they have taken the offer of the sacrifice

3.Rook is in danger
By taking the queen, black has now ended up placing their rook at d8. This puts it directly in the firing line of the white rook at d2

4. Checkmate!
Sure enough, the white rook advances to d8 to capture to rook. In the process it creates a checkmate that the king cannot escape

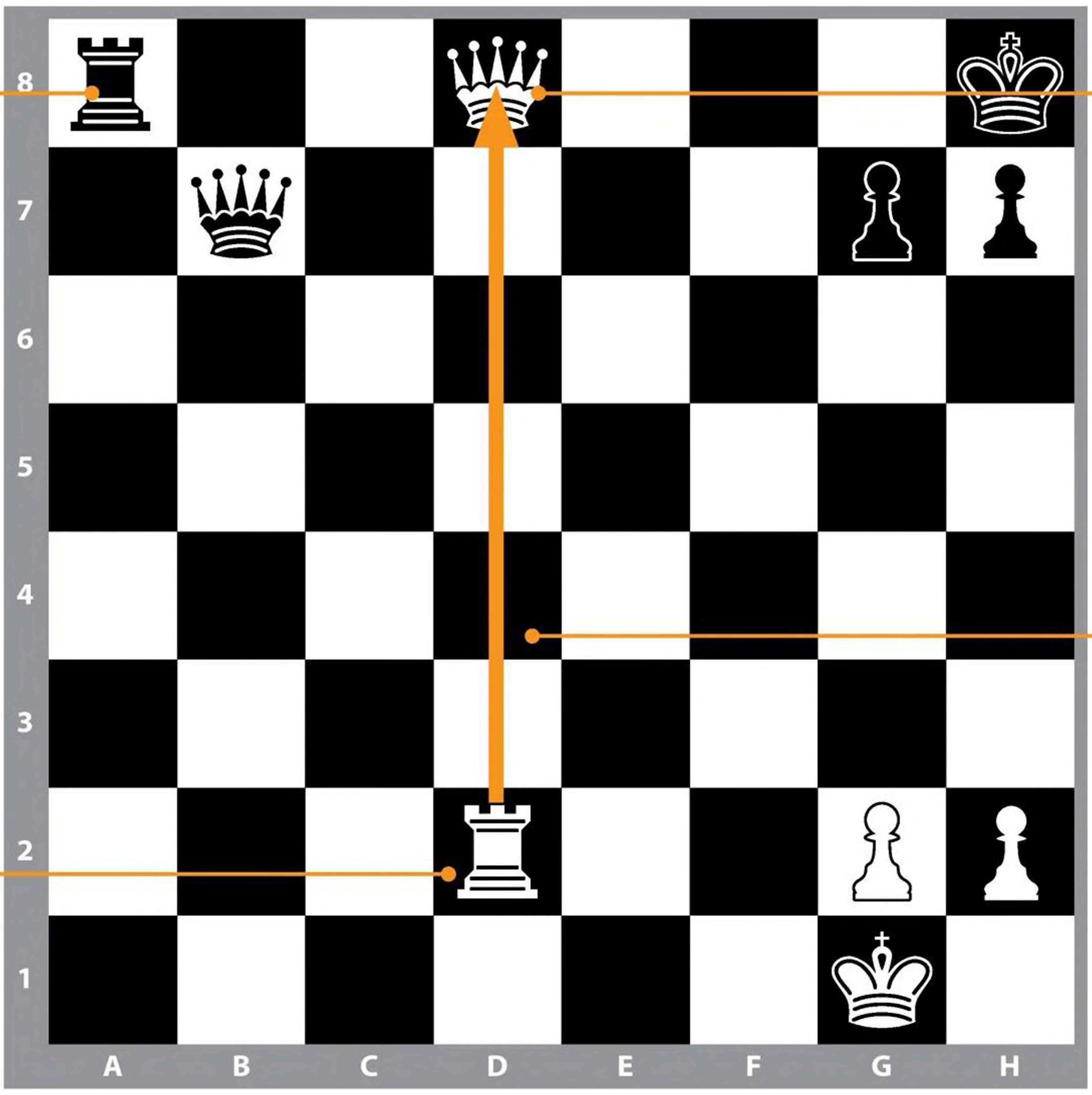


03: Forced sacrifice Kings takes bishop but white knight(1) moves to g5, forcing the king(2) to retreat. White queen(3) can then come forward diagonally to h5 to add pressure.



04: King is pinned Black moves rook(1) to e8 to give the king room to breathe. It's not enough as queen(2) moves to e7. The king is pinned, forcing black to resign the match.

Queen sacrifice A basic example



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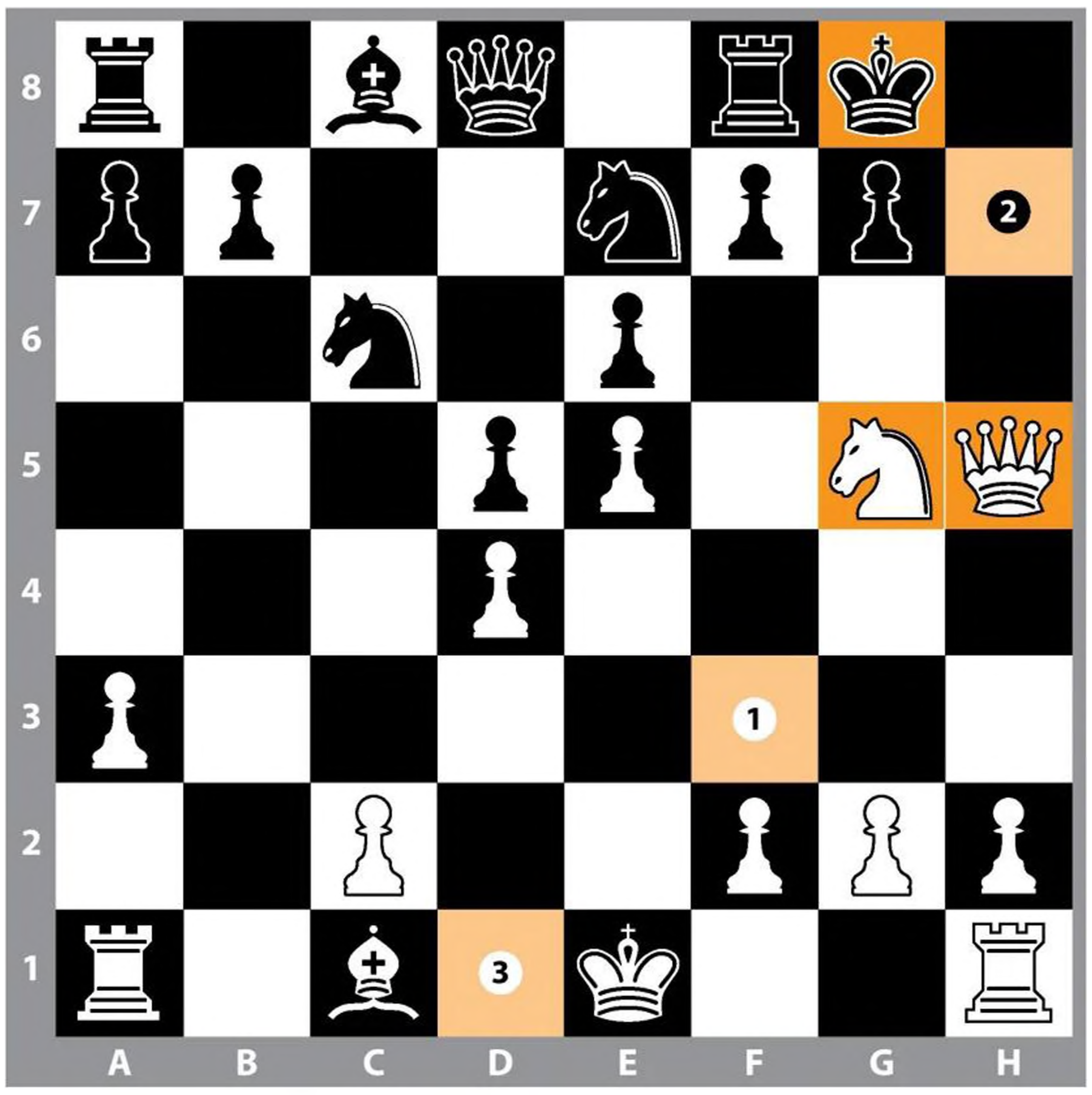

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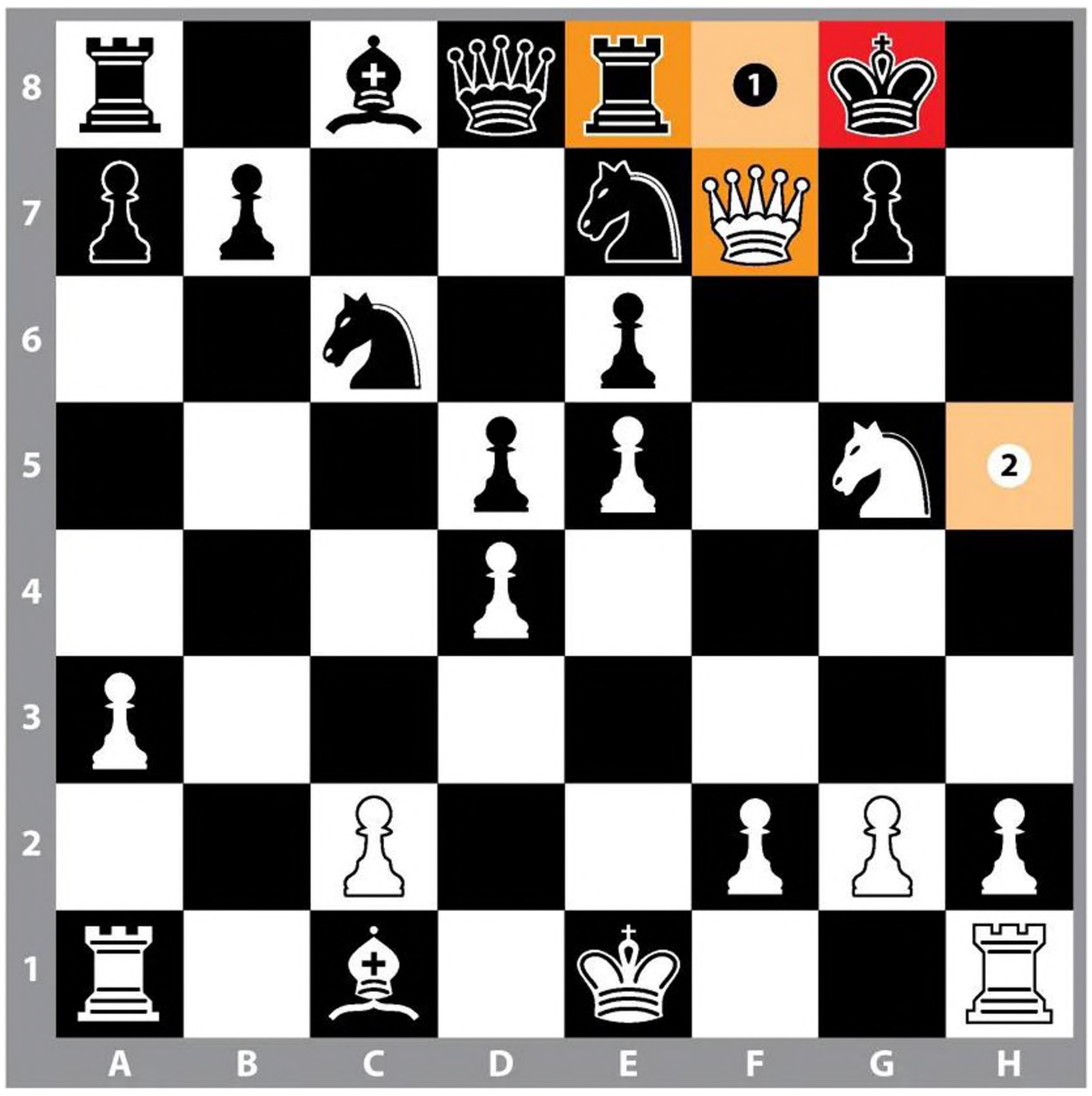

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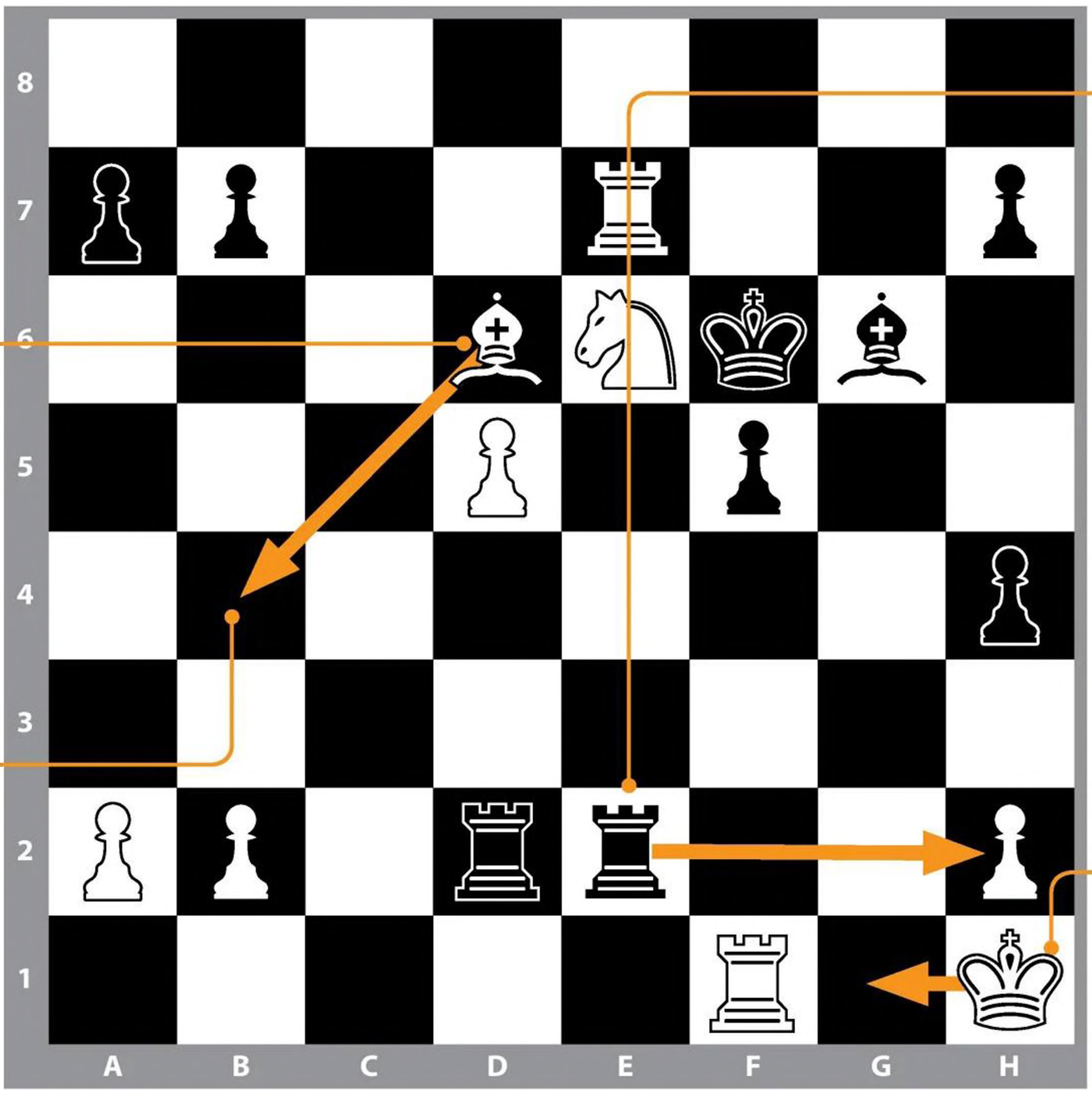
Playing the game

Chigorin vs Steinitz A real-life example of a blunder

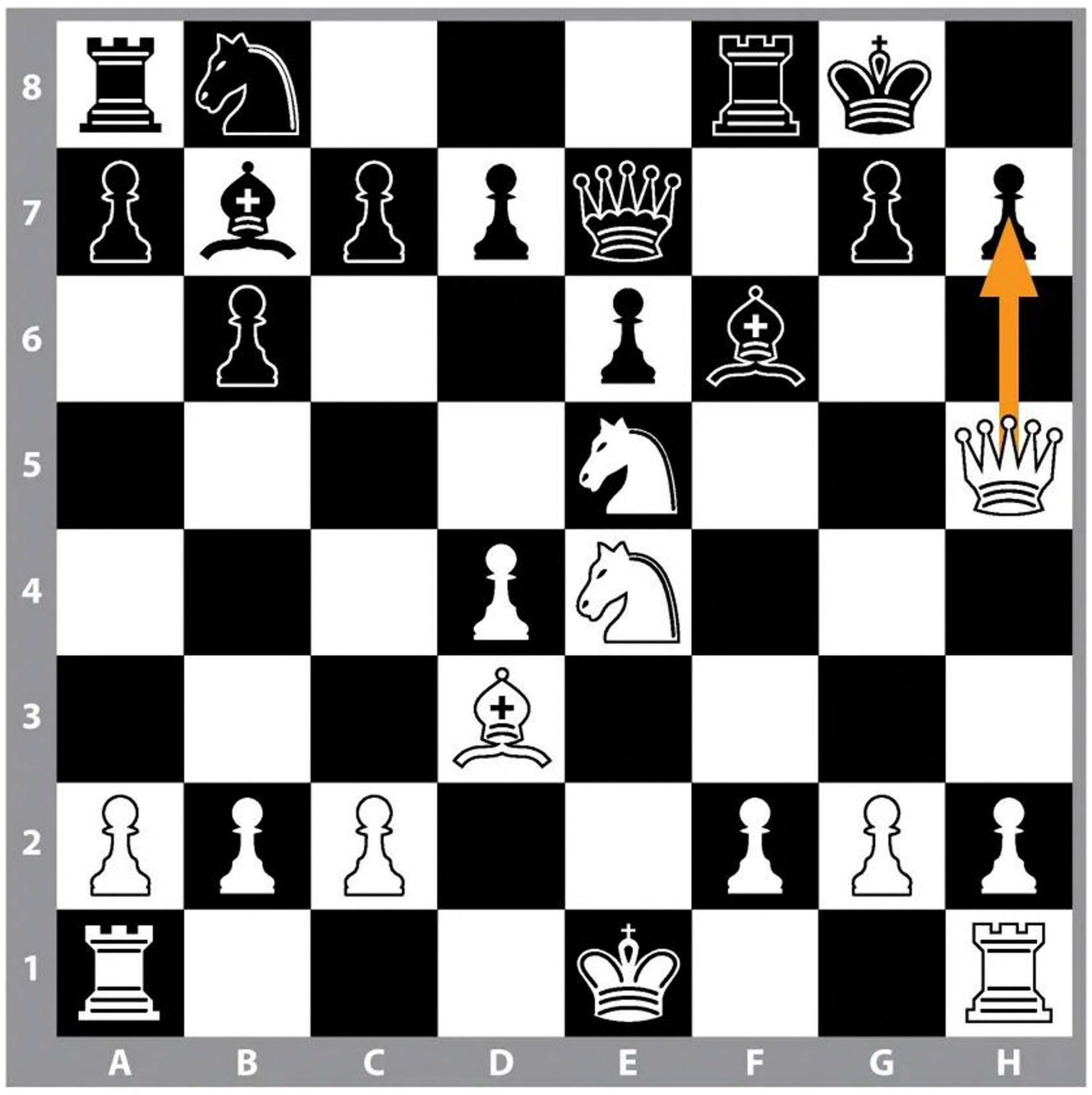


1. Bishop pinned
At this stage white's bishop is locked to d6. It is protecting both the rook on e7 and the pawn on h2 (against a possible mate)

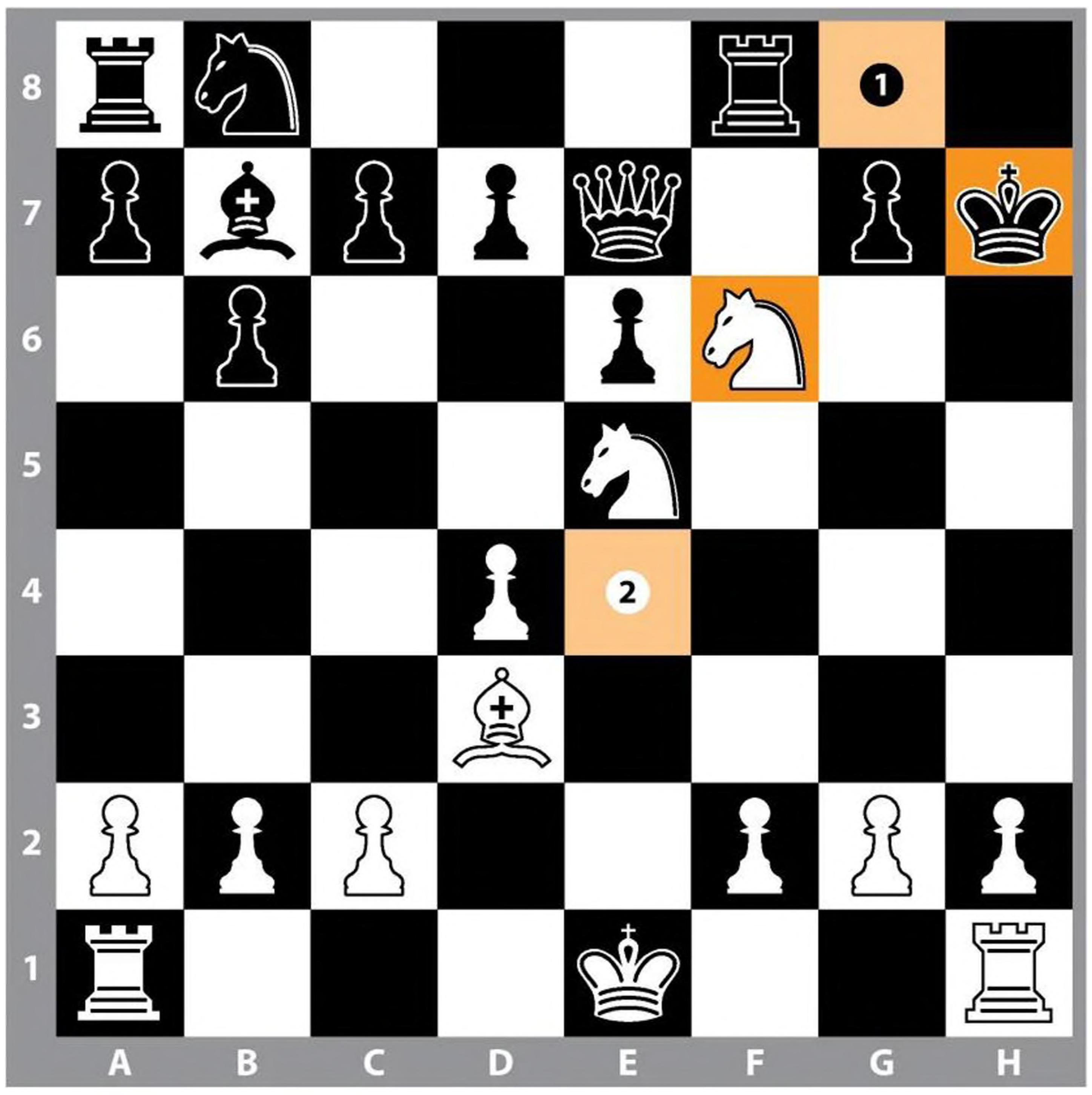
2. The blunder
For some reason, Chigorin (as white) opted to move the bishop to b4 to threaten the black rook on d2

3. Rook moves to check
Steinitz (as black) responded by playing rook to h2. This placed the king into check. At this point Chigorin resigned

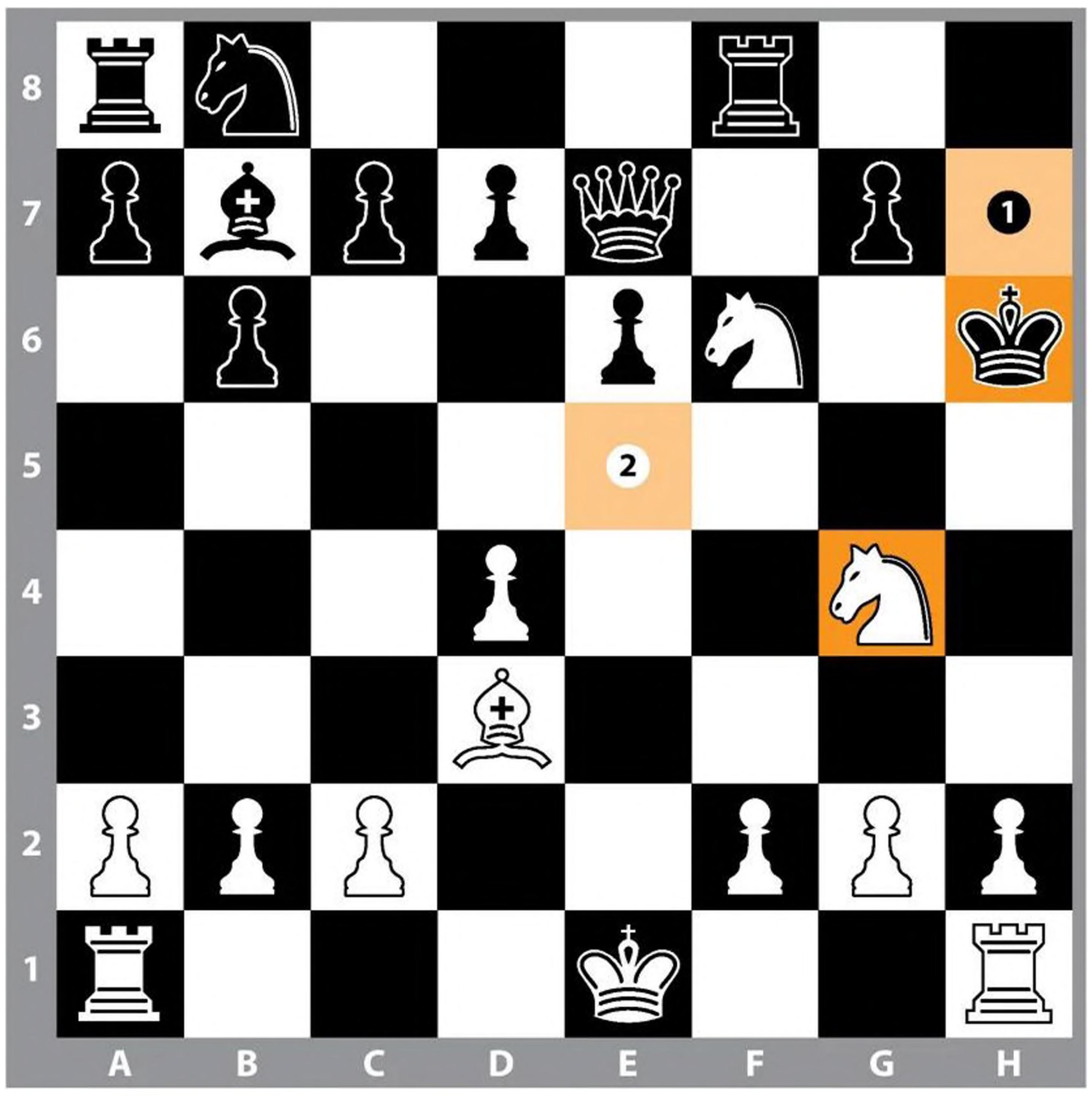
4. Check and mate
Although Chigorin could have moved to g1 to escape the rook's check, Steintz could have moved his other rook to g2 to lock the king in



01: Queen sacrifice The match Lasker vs Thomas (1912) features a famous queen sacrifice by Edward Lasker. At this point, the queen is about to move to h7 to be sacrificed.



02: Forced king The king(1) is forced to move to h7 (the knight has f7 covered) and take the queen. The white knight(2) moves to f6, taking a bishop and double-checking the king.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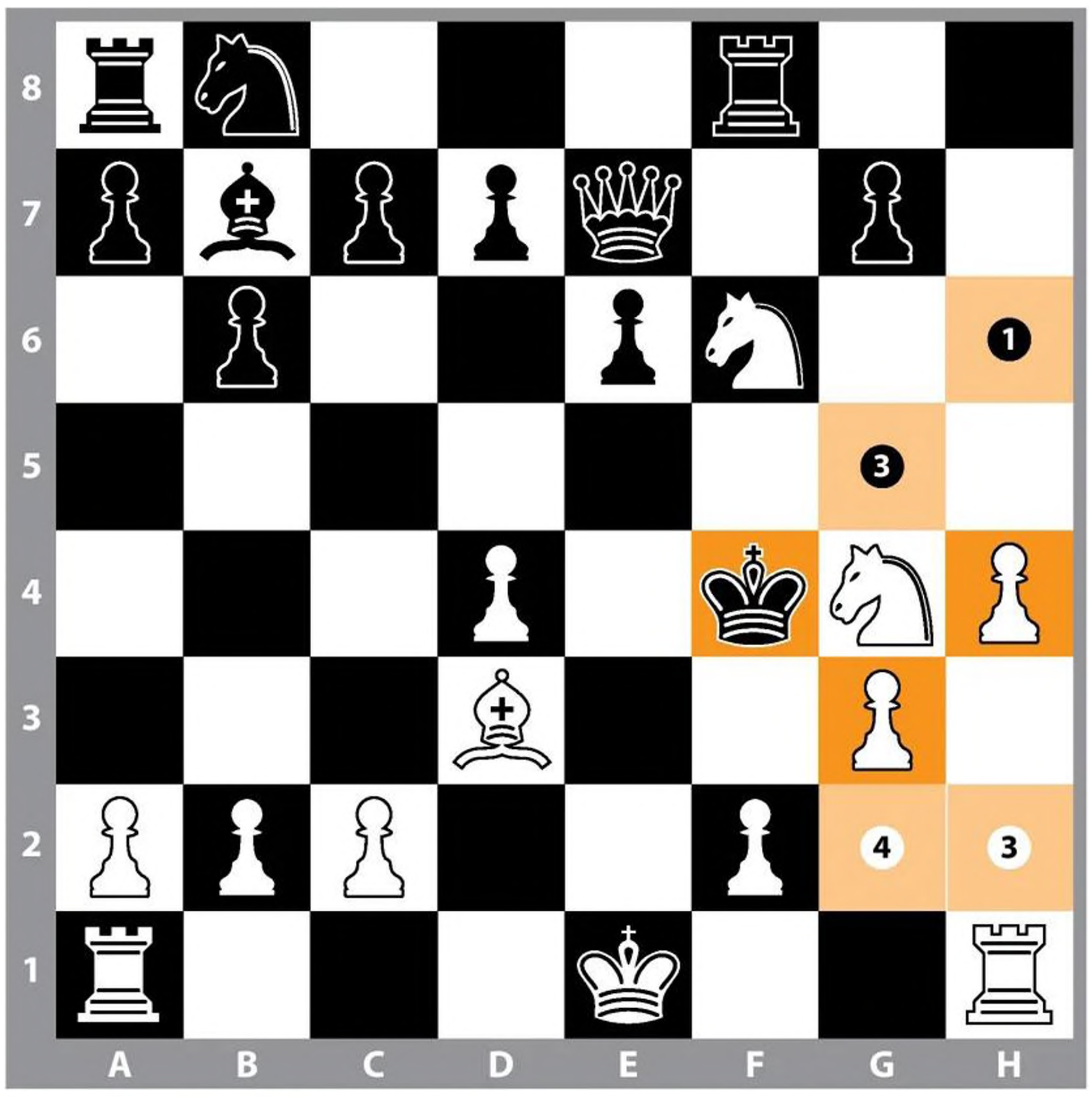
03: Checked again The king(1) is forced to h6 (moving to h8 results in checkmate). White knight(2) responds to g4 to check it again. The bishop at d3 stops the king retreating.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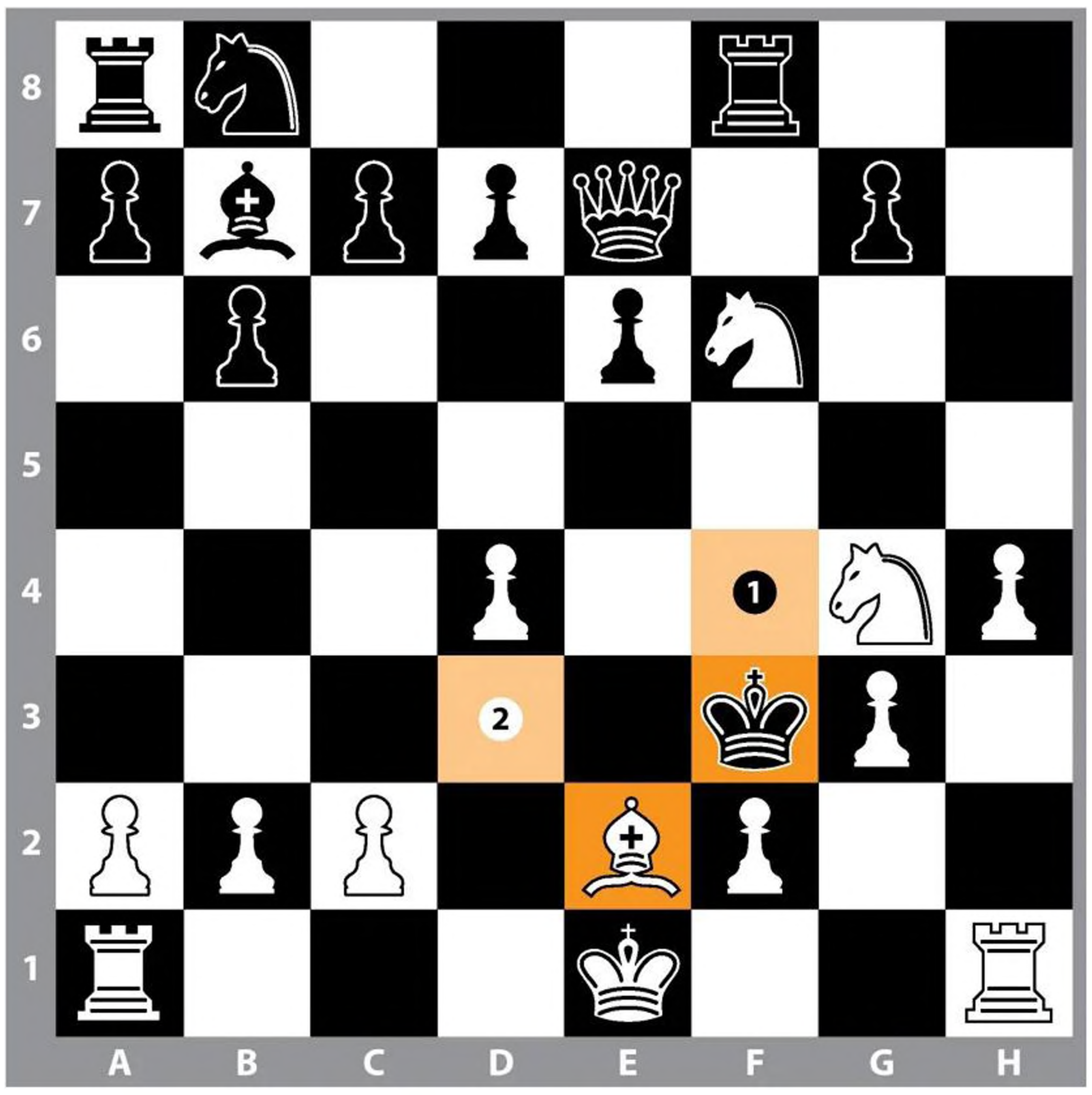
04: Pawns advance The king(1) moves ahead to g5 but the white pawn(2) advances to h4, putting it in check again. The king(3) is forced to f4, but another pawn(4) checks again at g3.

"The match Lasker vs Thomas (1912) features a famous queen sacrifice by Edward Lasker"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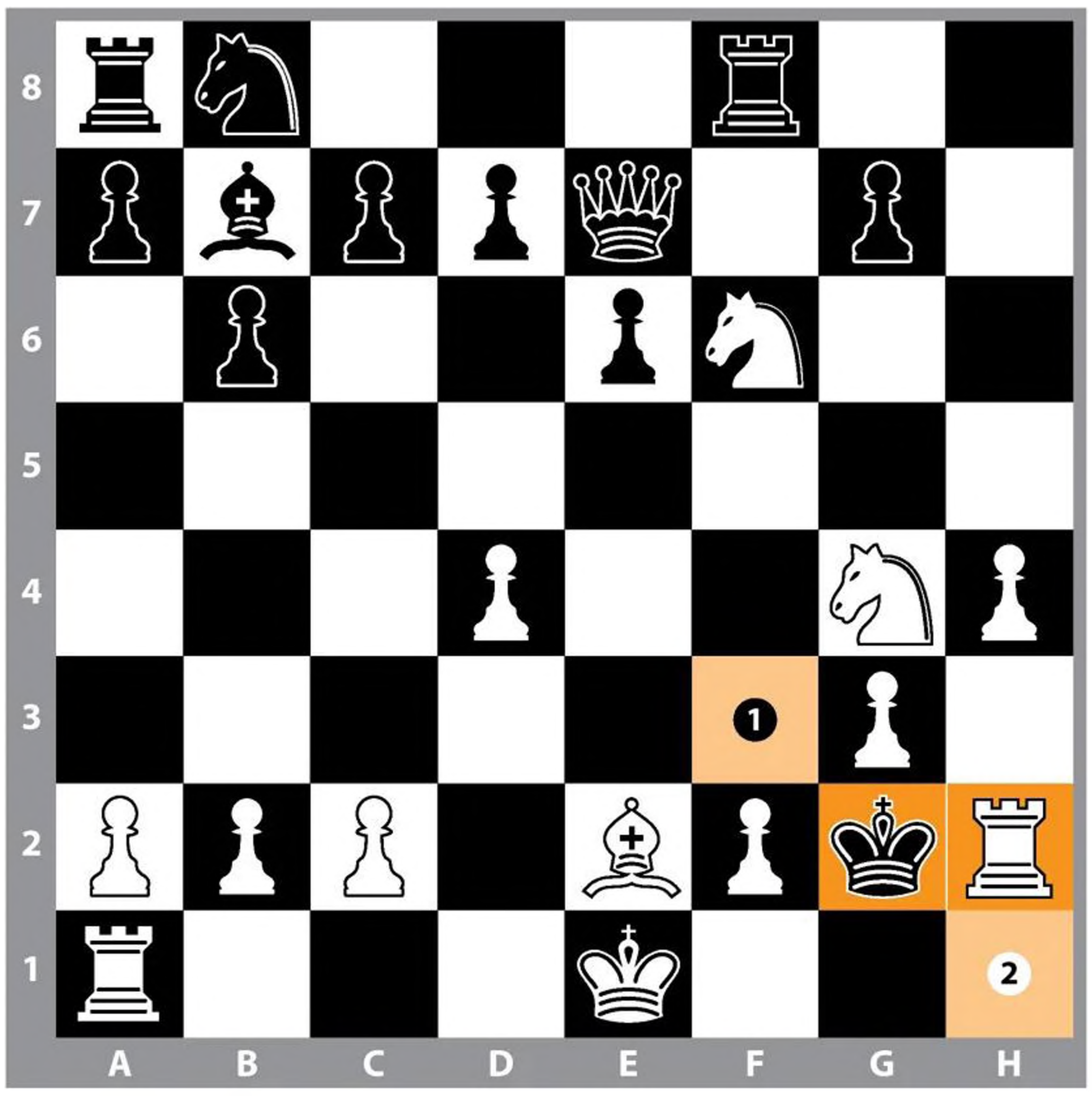
05: No retreat Again the king(1) is forced to move. It reaches f3 but the white bishop(2) moves to e2, putting it in check again. The knights and pawn stop it retreating.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06: Black resigns The king(1) is forced to g2. The white rook(2) moves to h2, leaving black (Thomas) to resign. If the king moved to g1, white could castle for a checkmate.

Pawn structures

The humble pawn plays some important roles. Being aware of structure and weaknesses is key to good results

In chess the pawns are seen as the infantry: they are the most numerous pieces in the game as well as the weakest. They are limited in movement and lack the reach of more important pieces. It is because of this perceived weakness that more valuable pieces would avoid capture by such a minor piece. A player would arguably move their rook, knight, bishop or queen to a safer square rather than be captured by a pawn. In effect this can give the pawn an element of strength and influence. Over the course of a game, the layout of your pawns (or 'pawn structure') can become important. In general it is not possible to determine whether a particular pawn structure is good or bad, as much of it depends on the layout of the other pieces. While some recognised formations have a symmetrical layout along the vertical lines of e and d and look similar, they tend to have varying characteristics due to the positioning of the king on each side.

As a game progresses, your pawn structure may develop weaknesses (although, as with many things with chess, these can be argued either way). Examples include isolated pawns: those without a friendly pawn on an adjacent square as protection. There are also doubled pawns, where two are on the same file; they can't defend each other and can be a hindrance during an endgame. You may also end up with pawns that can't advance due to lack of protection; these are backwards pawns.

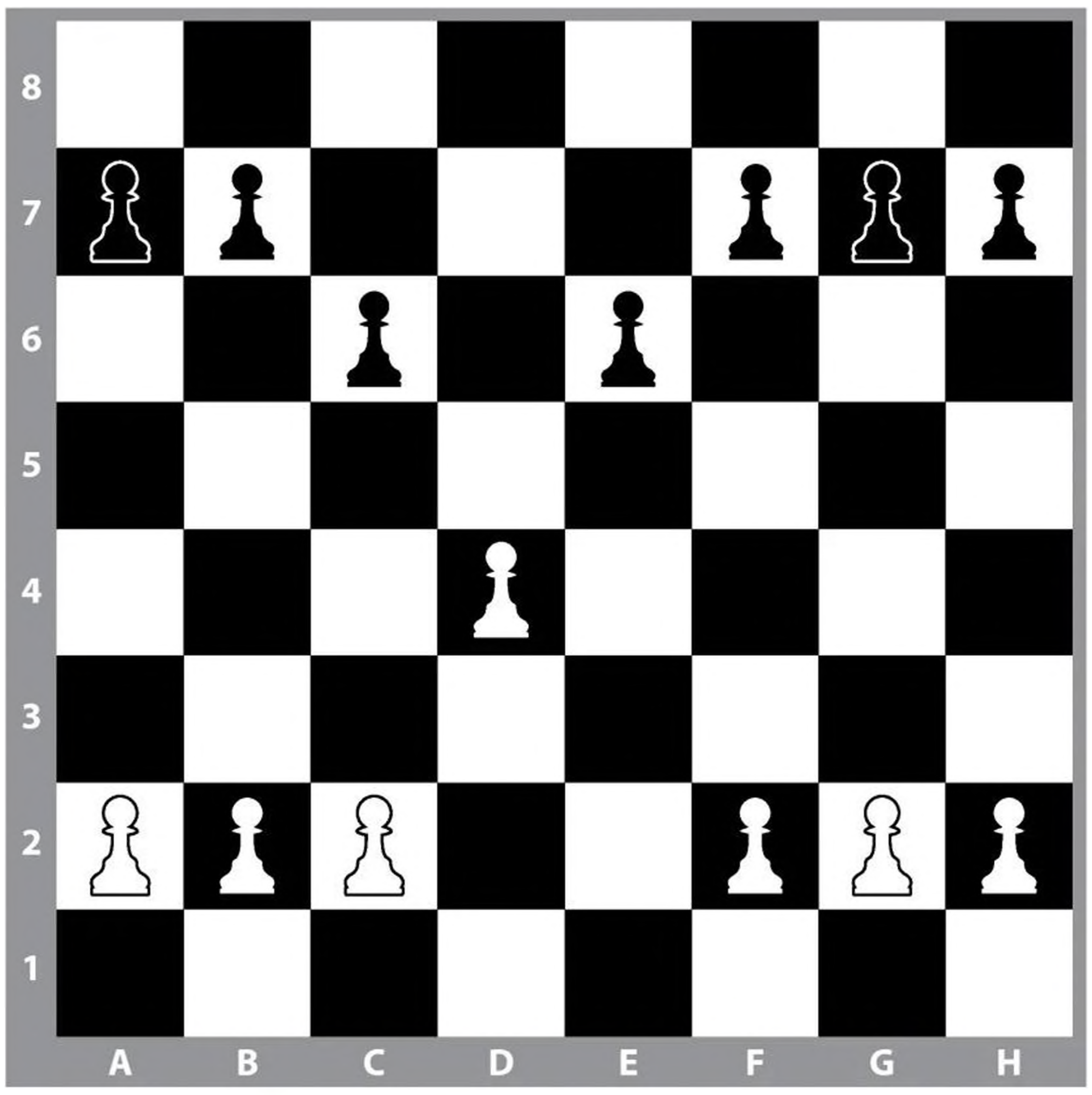
There are a number of recognised pawn structures. In the following examples we will look solely at the pawn positioning, without the other pieces on the board to serve as distractions.

Top tip

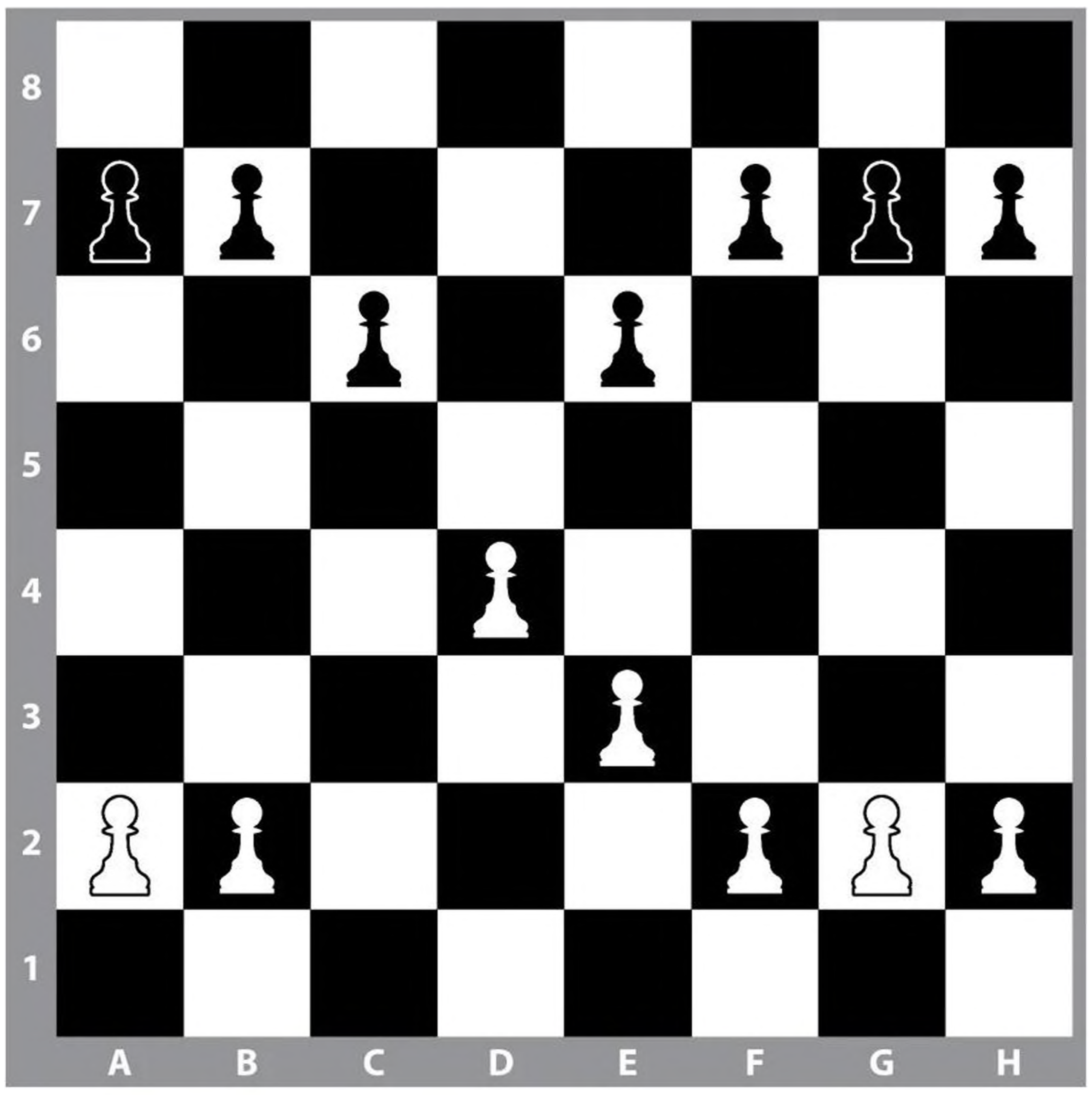
When to advance

The pawn is the only piece that can't move backwards. So, every move a pawn makes is permanent. Only look to move a pawn to achieve goals such as developing another piece or controlling the centre.

> "As a game progresses, your pawn structure may develop weaknesses"



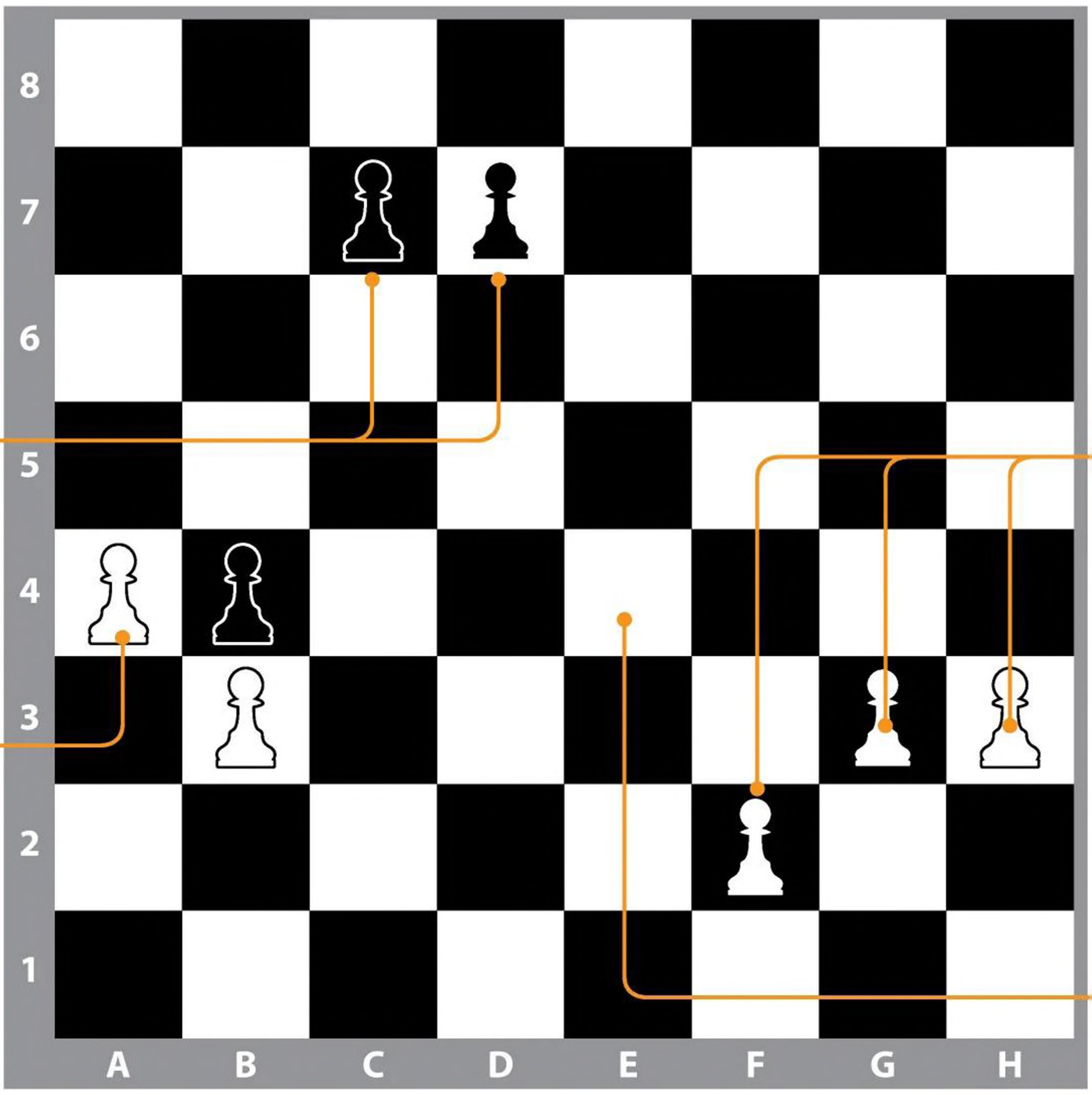
01: Caro formation This has a white pawn placed at d4. It offers a queenside majority should black exchange it for the c pawn. For black, the white pawn may be a weakness.



02: Slav formation For white, this formation puts pressure on the c file and the weakness of the c pawn. Black can advance the c or e pawn if white's formation breaks.

Pawn layouts

A look at various layout terms

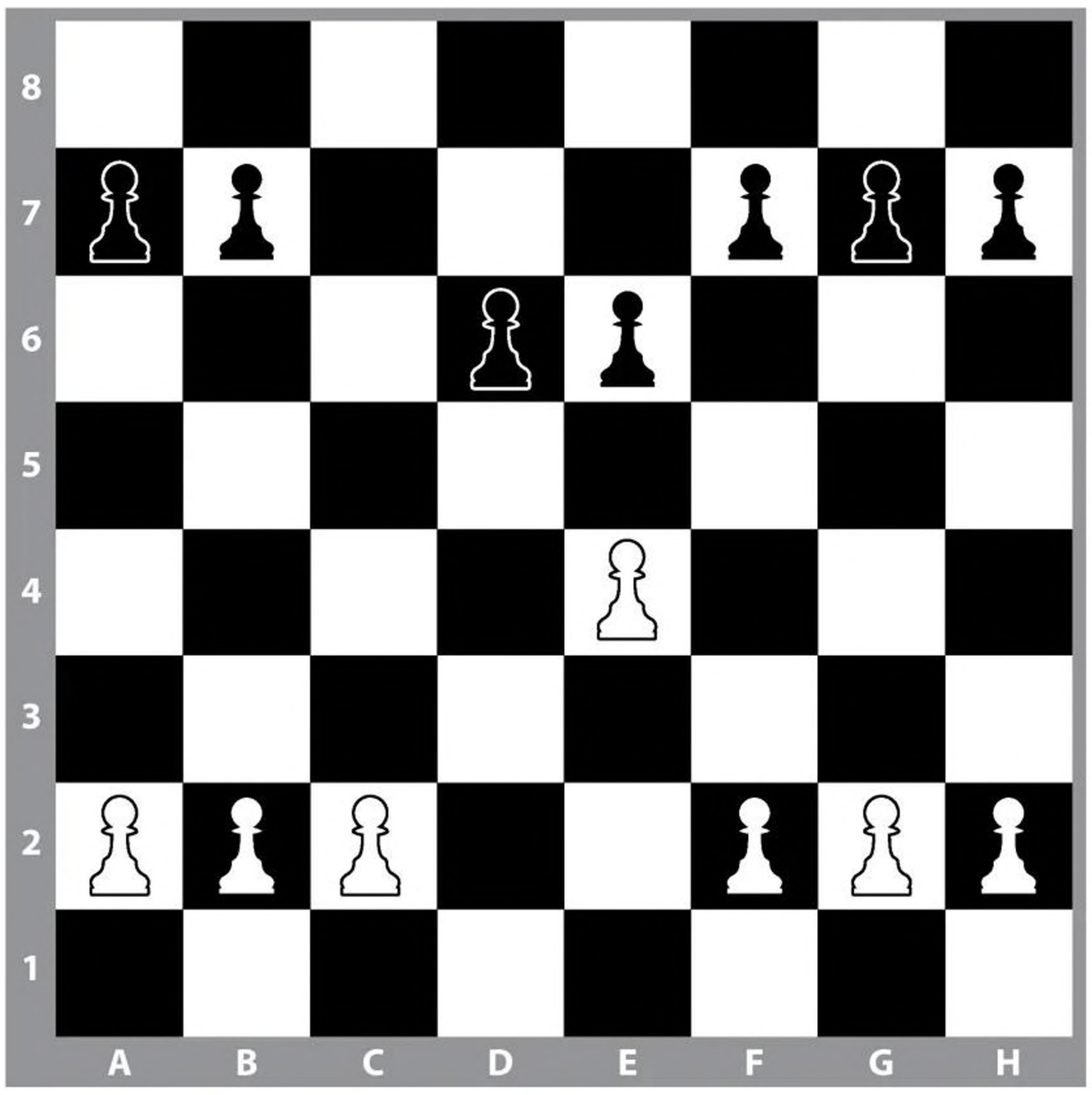


Connected pawns
Side by side (or connected) pawns are the strongest formation to play. They protect the weak square of the pawn to its side

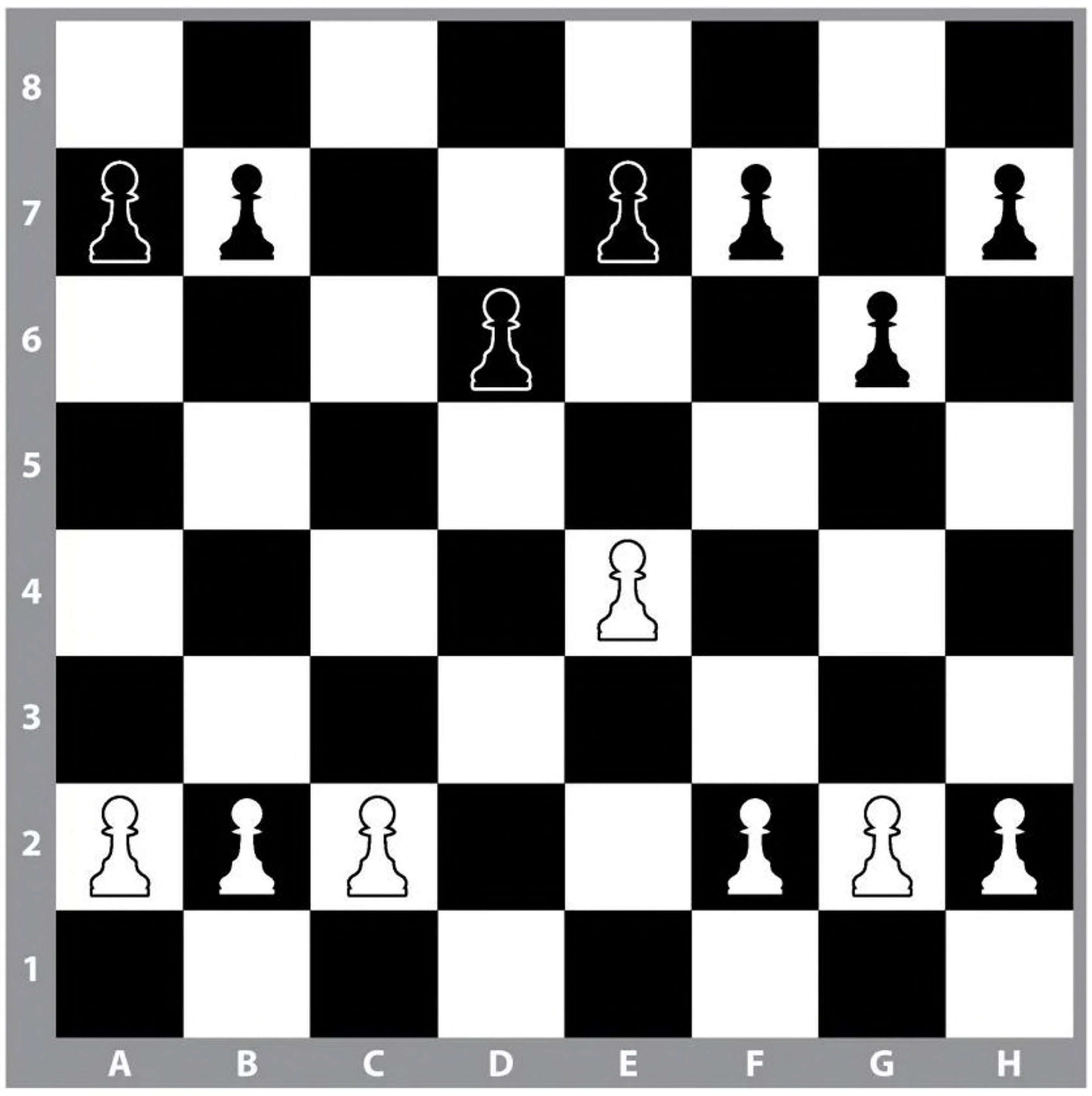
Passed pawn
A passed pawn has no opposing pawn in front of it. During the endgame it's a real threat as it could reach its eighth rank and be promoted

Pawn majority
A passed pawn can be an advantage. When a player has more pawns than the opponent on one side of the board, it's called a majority

Open file
An open file is a vertical line on the chessboard where no pawns are present. This occurs when pawns switch files while capturing



03: Sicilian-Scheveningen A more complex game. White can pressure the d file and has a space advantage. Black can pressure the b file and white's pawn on e4 or e5.



04: Sicilian-Dragon Here, white has an outpost at e5. Black can apply pressure via diagonal queenside counterplay and white's overextended kingside pawns.

Fianchetto

With the fianchetto move, your bishop can quickly gain control over a long section of the board, making it a useful weapon in your arsenal

Top tip

Locked pawns

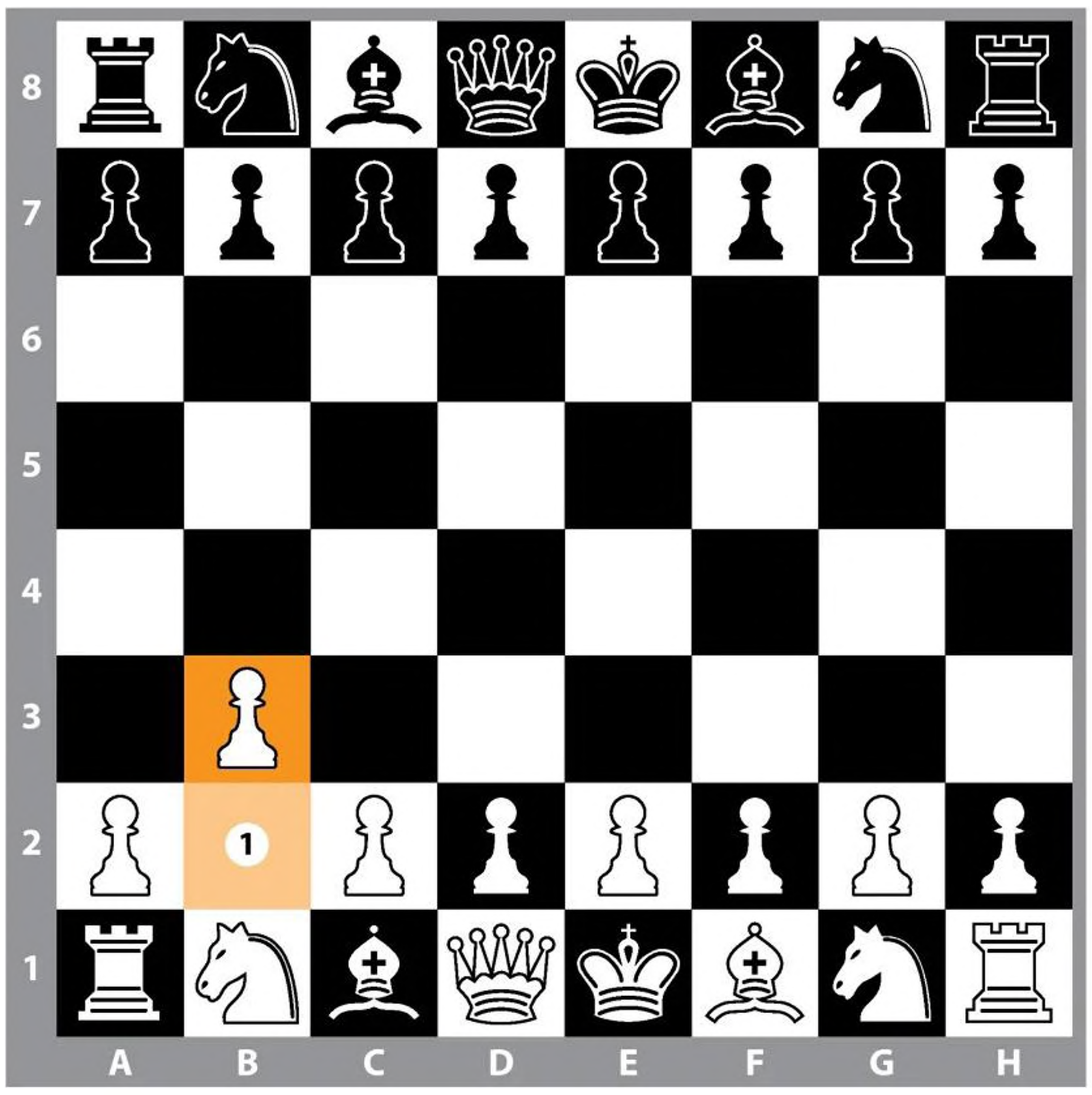
If you're playing black and you spot that white is playing a fianchetto, you can block the centre with locked pawns. This will cut off the long reach of the fianchettoed bishops, along which they could otherwise zoom.

The word fianchetto means 'little flank' in Italian. It's an apt term that over the years has been applied to a particular pattern of moves involving the bishop. The fianchetto allows the bishop to develop into an advantageous position. This move is likely to appear during the opening of a game, as it allows the bishop to become more active.

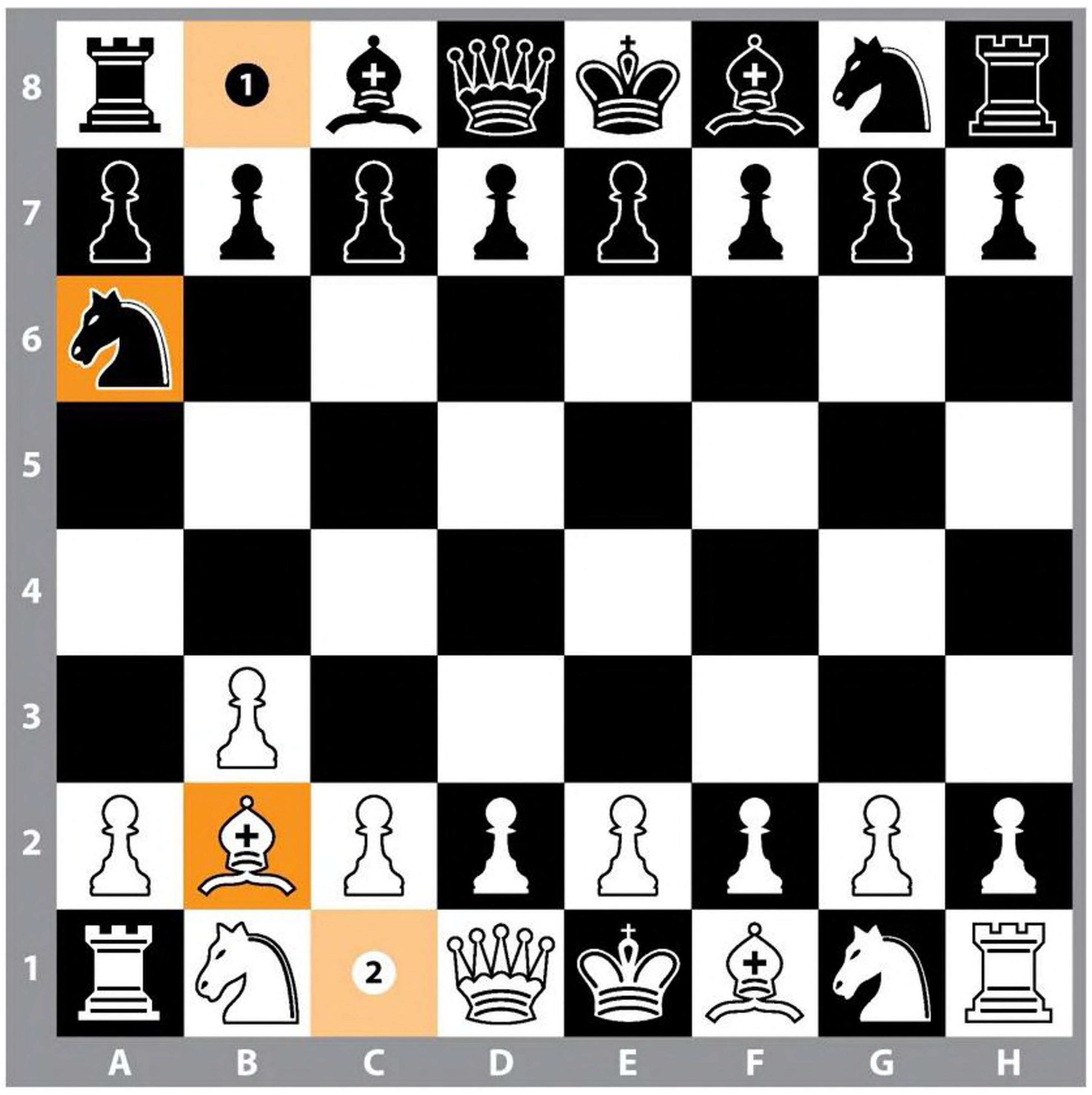
Fianchettoing a bishop involves moving either your b or g pawn forward. This will then free up the required space for the bishop to develop. Once this is done, the bishop will be located upon its longest diagonal line on the board. This will give it control over a good number of squares. This makes it a useful offensive weapon to have in your arsenal. Thanks to its long range, the bishop is poised to spring into action if required. It can also serve as a way of counteracting your opponent's advances towards the centre squares. On some occasions the fianchettoed bishops are even saved for the endgame.

Fianchettos can be played on the queen or king side (or both, known as the double fianchetto) but the queen's side is usually seen as stronger. If played from the king's side, the pawn structure could be weakened by the Fianchetto itself. While the fianchetto can be a useful starter for a game (it can help beginner players think about their long-term positioning), it may also prove helpful to an opponent. An opposing player would likely start thinking 'outside the box' about placing pieces on locations that may negate the effectiveness of the fianchetto. Also, your knight could end up being stuck, as if it moves in front of the bishop it will block the effect of the bishop's attack.

> "This will give the bishop control over a good number of squares"



01: Pawn moves out The white knight's pawn(1) is moved forward. If it is moved two squares forwards pending the bishop moving, it is known as a long fianchetto.



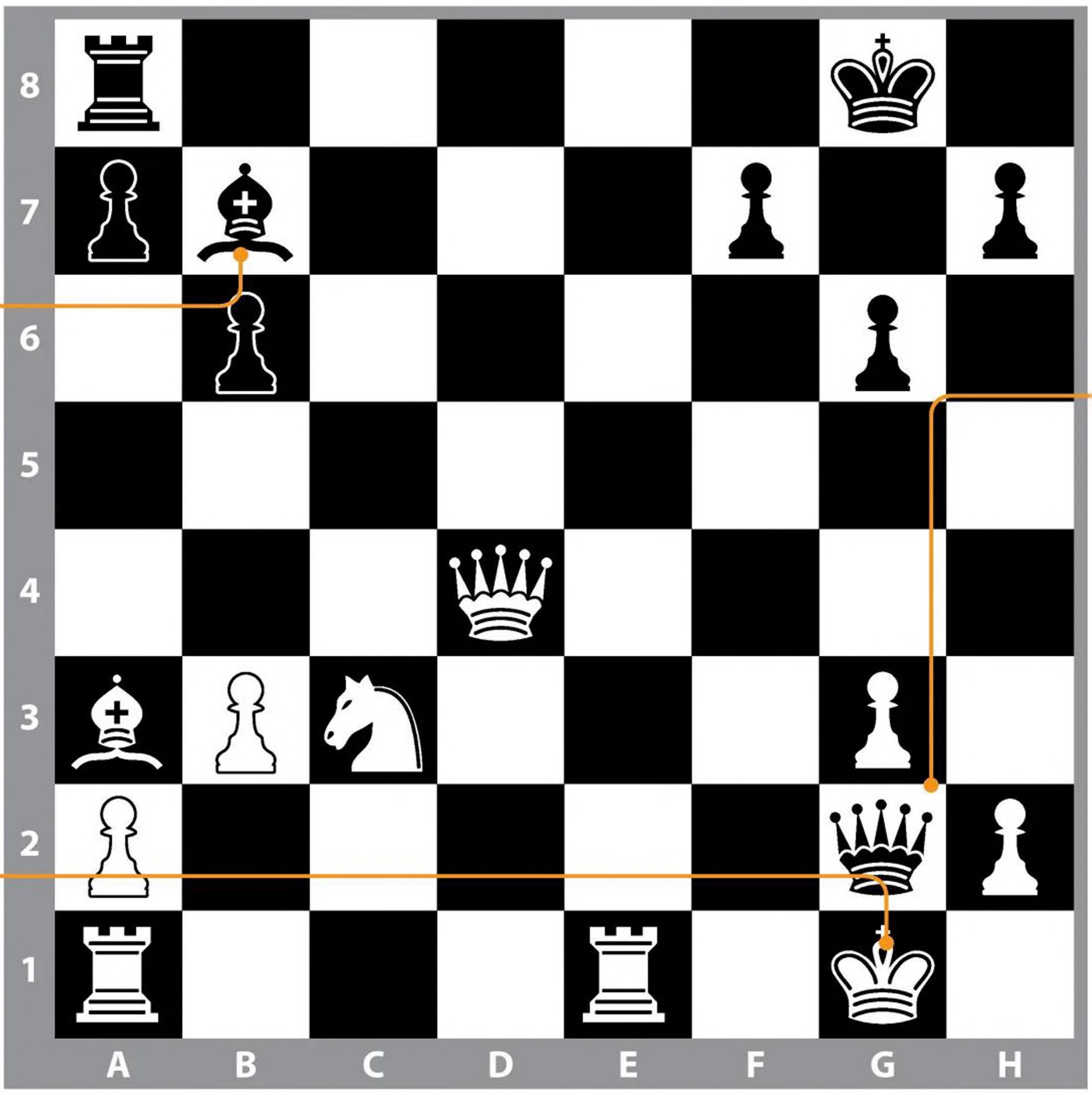
02: Bishop develops Black(1) makes their move as per normal. The white bishop(2) can now move to c3. It now has a direct line across the diagonal from b2 to h8.

The power of fianchetto

An endgame example of fianchetto

1. Black bishop
In this endgame of R Byrne vs Fischer (1963), the black bishop on the queen's side has been fianchettoed. It has only been moved twice

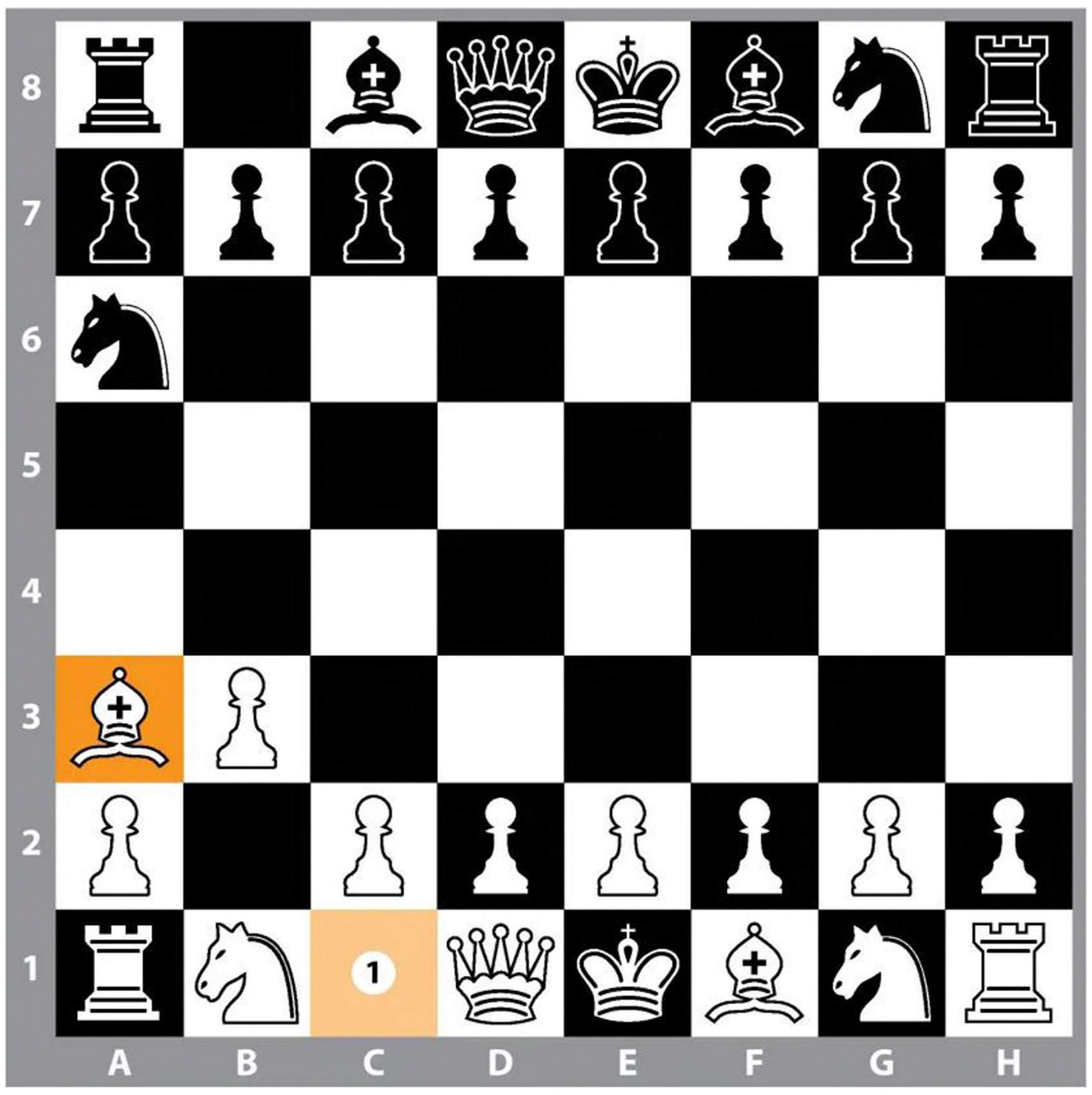
Fianchetto power
The king cannot take the queen as the space is protected by the black bishop all the way from across the board. Checkmate!



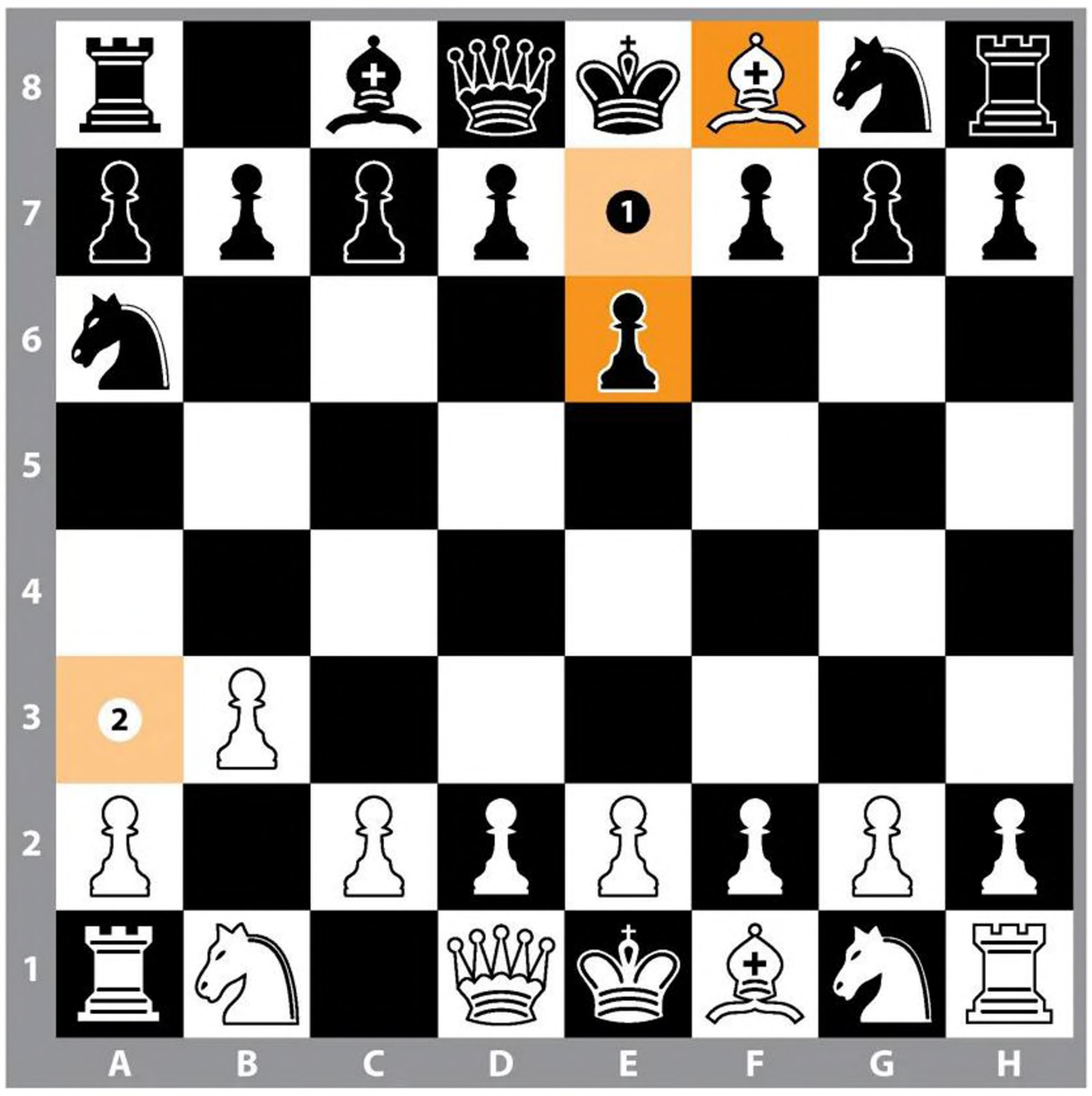
2. Black queen attacks
In the final stages of the match, the queen has moved to put pressure on the king. It is caught near the corner and needs to move

FACING A FIANCHETTO?

If you're on the receiving end of a fianchetto, there are options open to you. You can attack the side where the fianchetto has taken place. Attacking the pawns around the bishop can weaken your opponent's defensive structure.



03: Extended fianchetto There is an alternative space for bishop(1) to take. If it moves to c3, this is known as an extended fianchetto. This takes aim at black's f8 square.



04: Extended attack Should black move the e7 pawn(1), the white bishop(2) can strike and take the black bishop. The king will recapture, but black's defences are now breached.

Castling

Castling is a useful move to understand and will come in handy no matter where you are in a game. It is also unique in chess

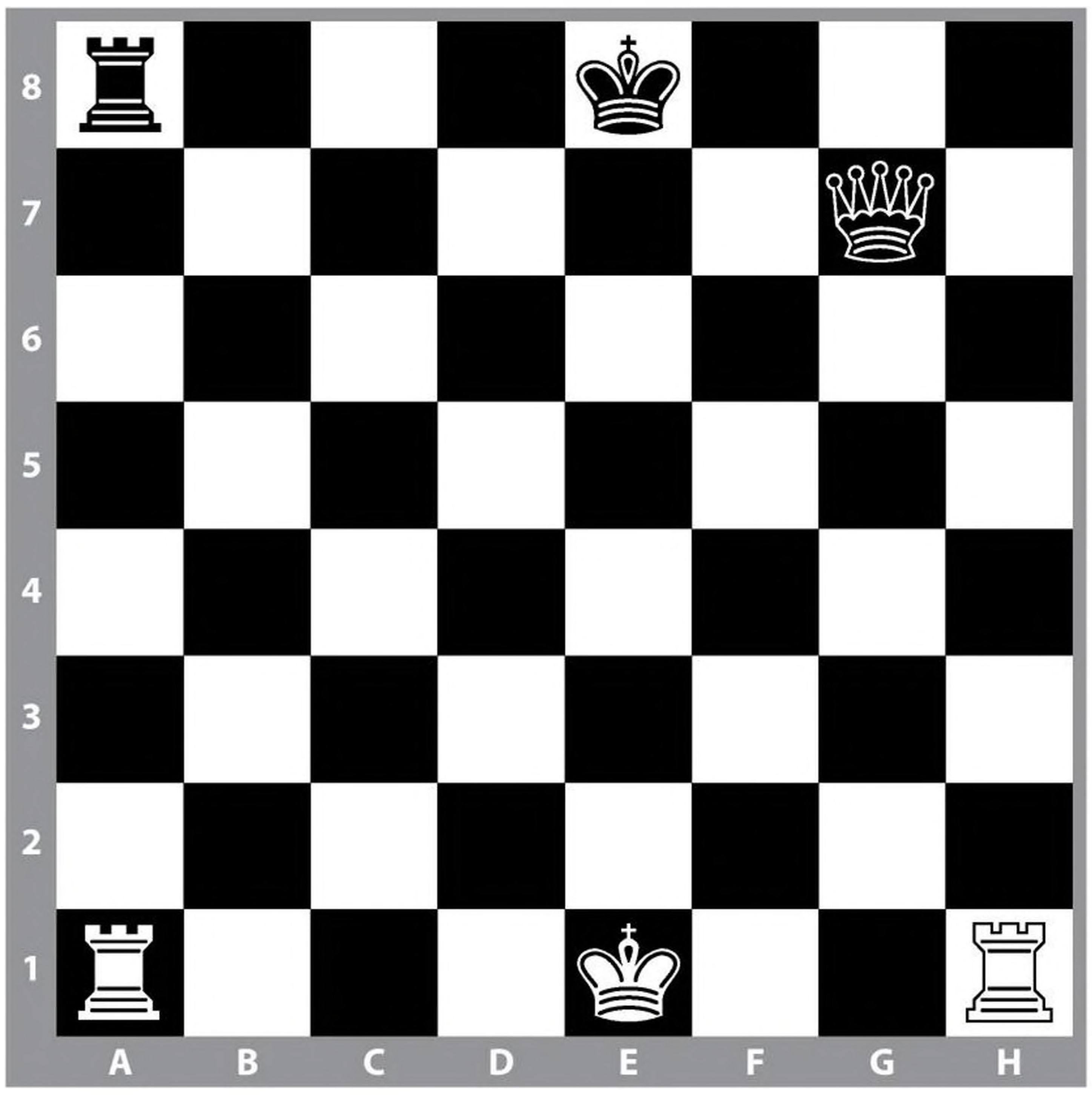
Top tip

Two reasons to castle

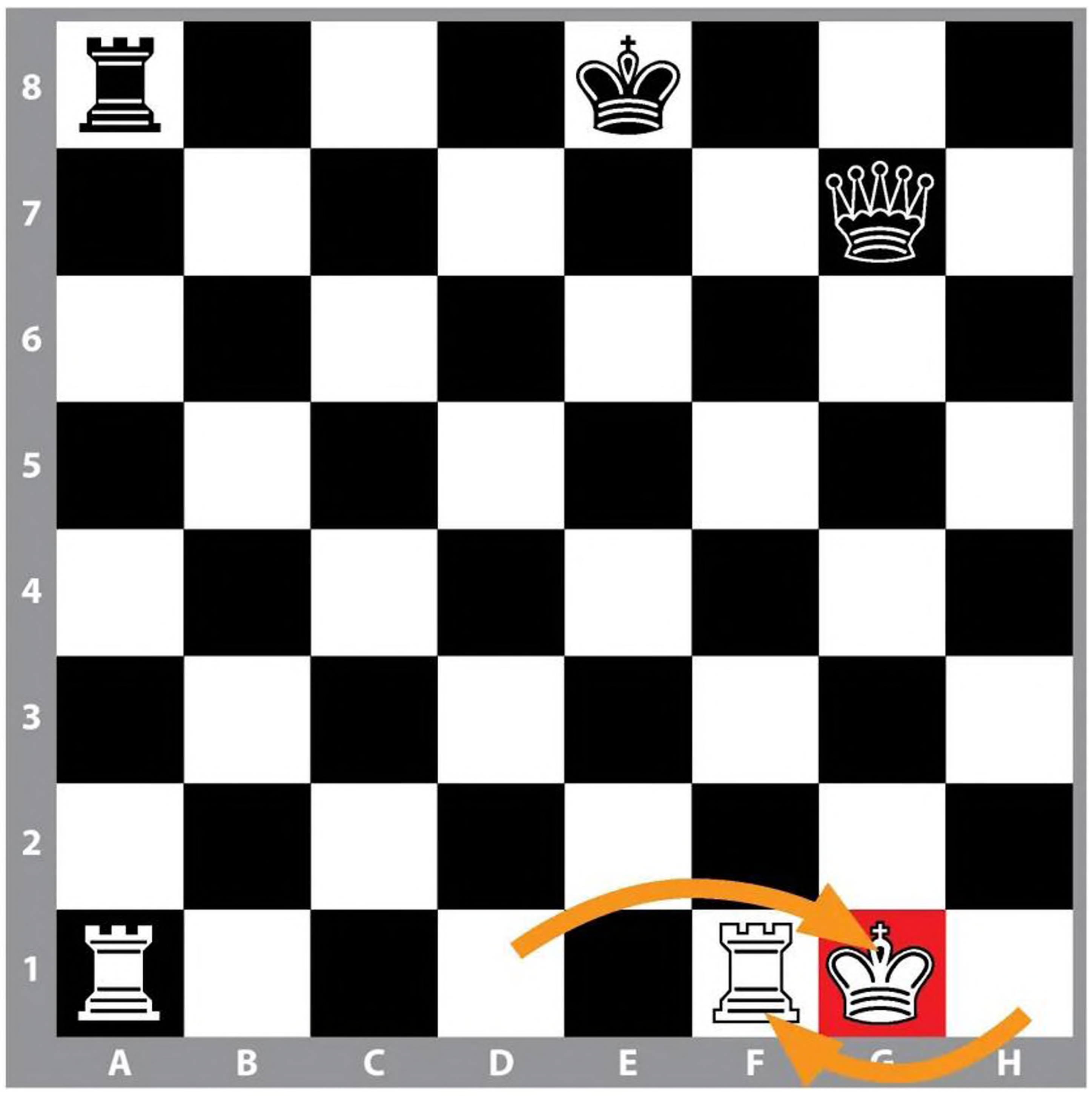
You may think the prime reason to castle is to protect the king, but it also brings the rook into the centre of the board, making it more active than previously.

Castling is, on the face of it, a highly unusual chess move. It is the only move in which you can jump over another piece and also the only one where you get to move two pieces at once. It carried many benefits which we will highlight, but there are also many reasons which will stop you from castling. You can castle kingside or queenside by moving your king two squares towards your rook, but there must be empty squares between the king and the rook to complete the move. Also, neither the king or rook can have moved previously for a castling to take place; this includes moving a piece and then moving it back to its original position. We won't stop there, however, because you cannot castle if the king is in check or will be in check if it is castled, the king cannot move through an attacked square and, as a final rule, both pieces must be on the player's first rank. This may appear to be constrictive, but it highlights why castling is most often undertaken in the early stages of a game. The opportunities are more plentiful and the reasons for castling are more advantageous thanks to the protection of a line of pawns and the need to bring powerful places into play. Ideally, you should also look to castle kingside because it will be closer to the corner of the board and as such have a greater degree of protection. It also requires the movement of fewer pieces to enable the move, but there is an upside in that active pieces will be nearer the centre of the rank. Each situation will determine which way to castle and, indeed, if you need to. If you are starting out, however, aim to do it as early as makes sense in any game you play.

> "There must be empty squares between the king and the rook"

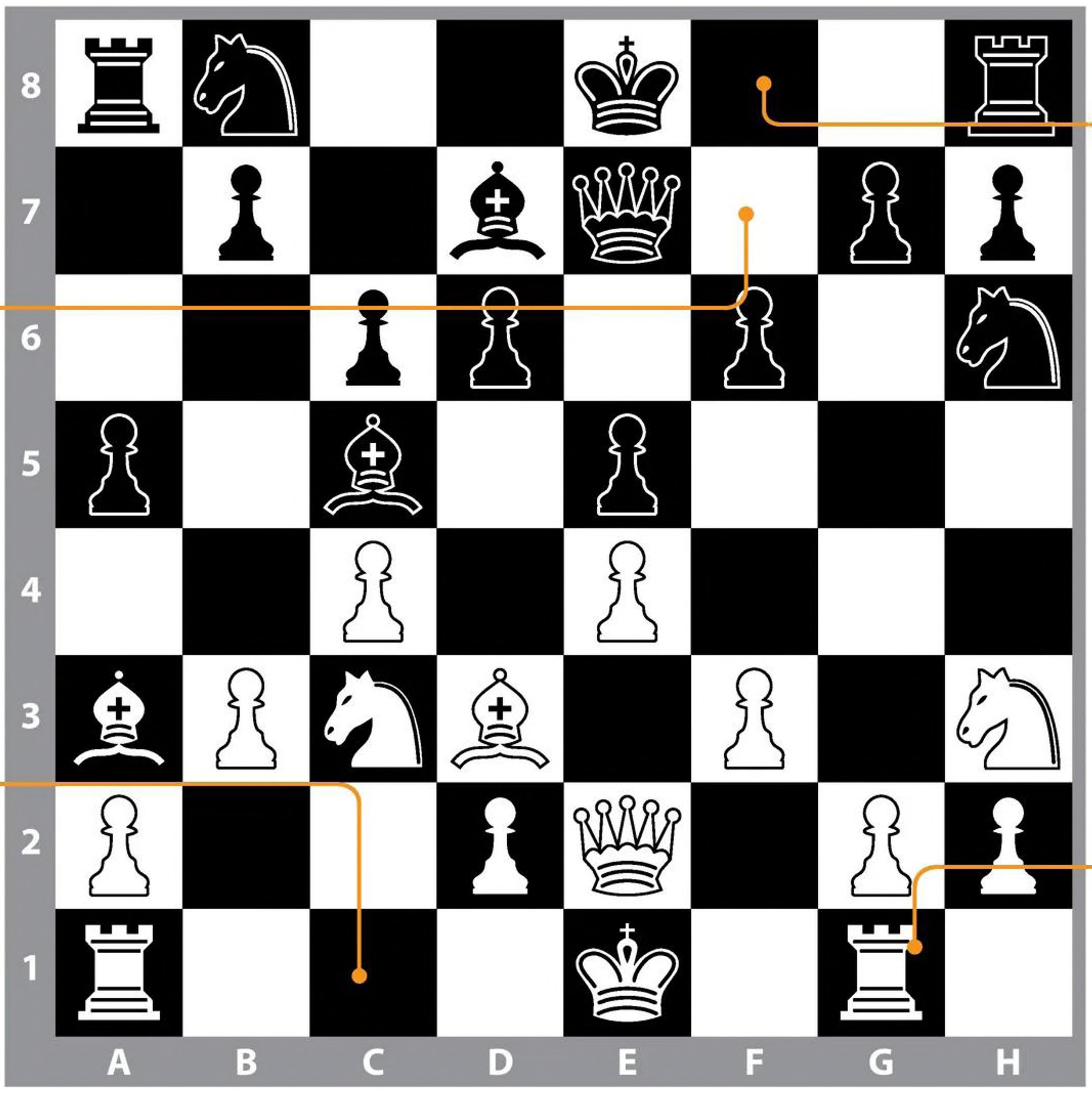


01: Castling any time If the criteria have been met, castling can happen at any time and not always at the start of a game. Don't ever miss an opportunity if it's available.



02: This cannot happen The situation shown here is not possible because the white king cannot castle if it ends up in check. At no point can the king put itself in check.

A muddled board Left or right castling?

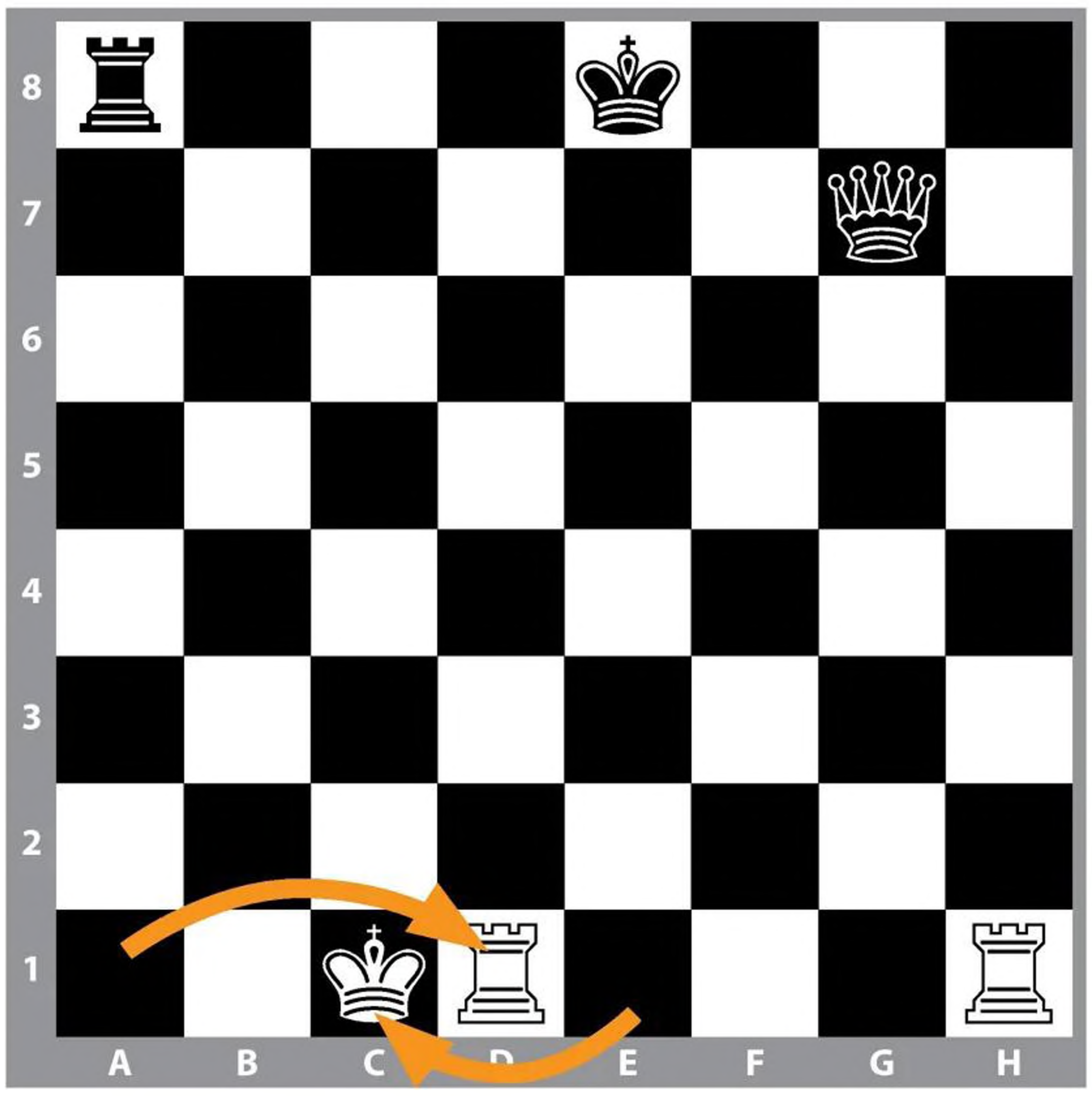


A chink in the armour
Black has left a small gap by moving the pawn upwards, but the position is still preferable in a castling sense compared to white

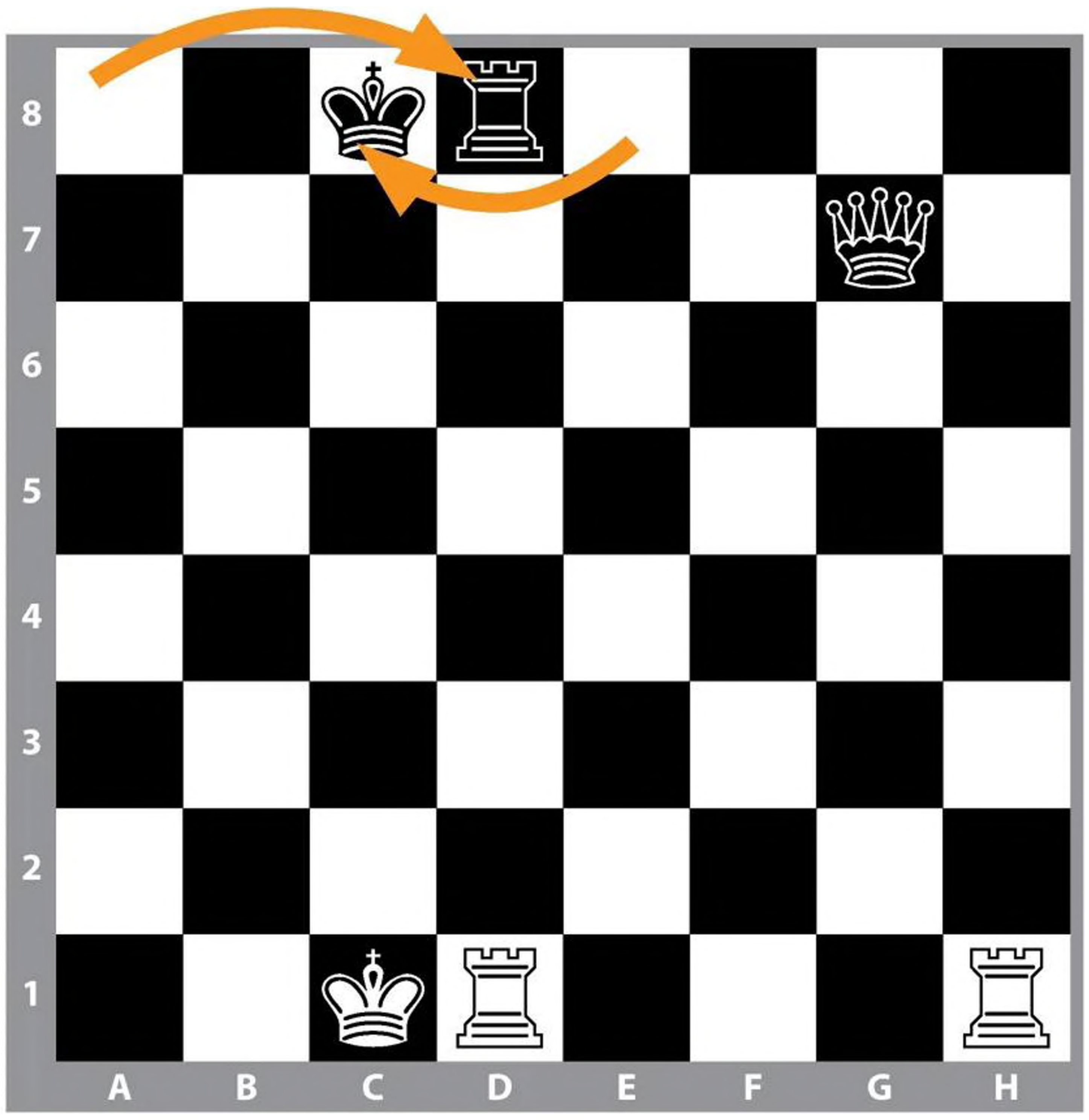
Go left instead
White can, however, move two squares to the left and castle that way, In this situation, protection is not as secure, however

An opportunity
Black can castle now because neither the king or rook have been moved previously. It is a logical next step for added protection

Stop right there
White cannot castle to the right because the rook has already been moved. Even if it is returned to h1, the move would be invalid

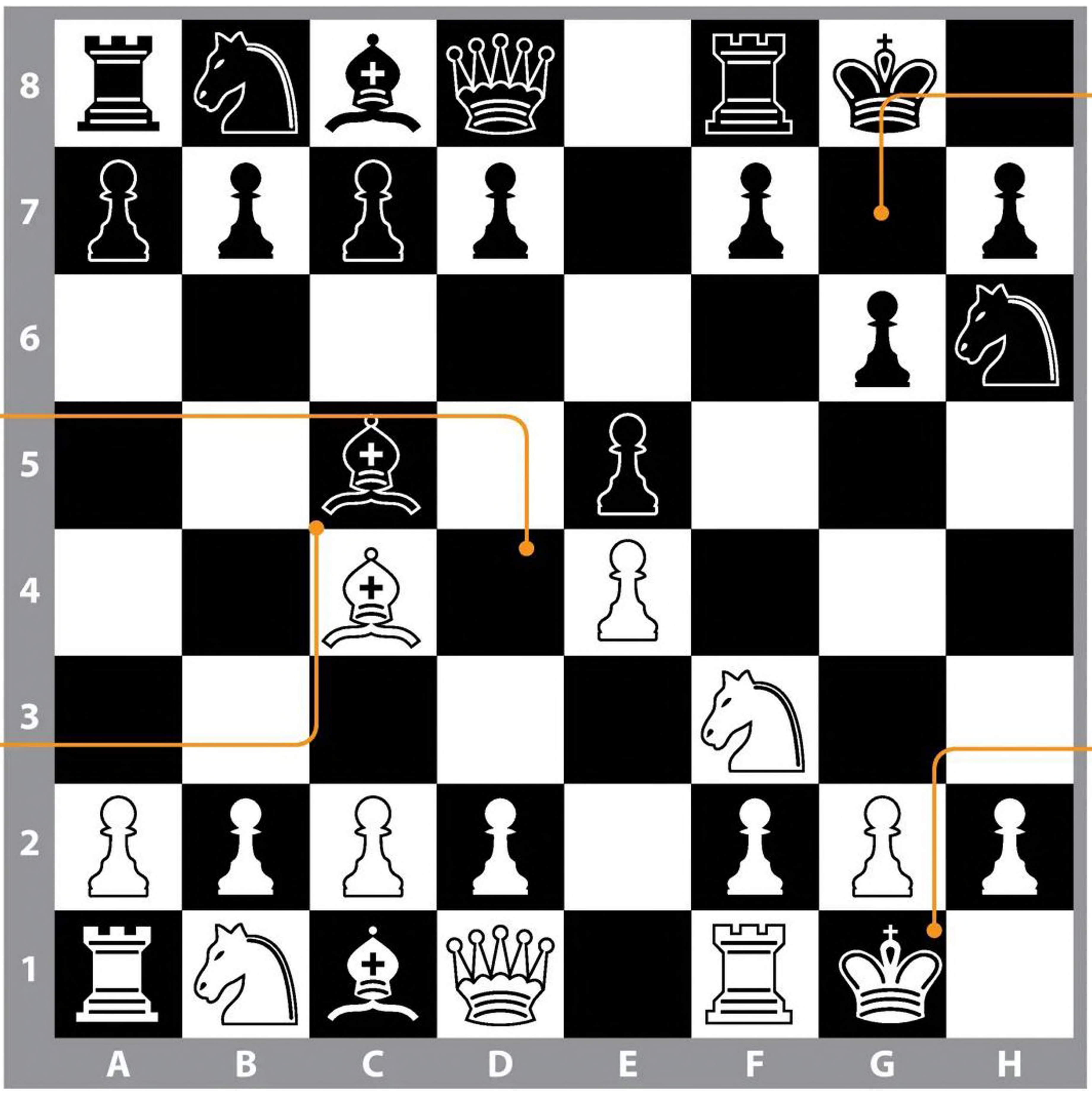


03: A legal castling White can, however, castle to the left, also known as queenside, even though it does not offer a huge advantage in this particular situation.



04: Again, not possible This looks like a valid castling, but the king is not allowed to pass through a square that is currently being attacked. In this case, by the white rook.

Almost a mirror image Some subtle differences

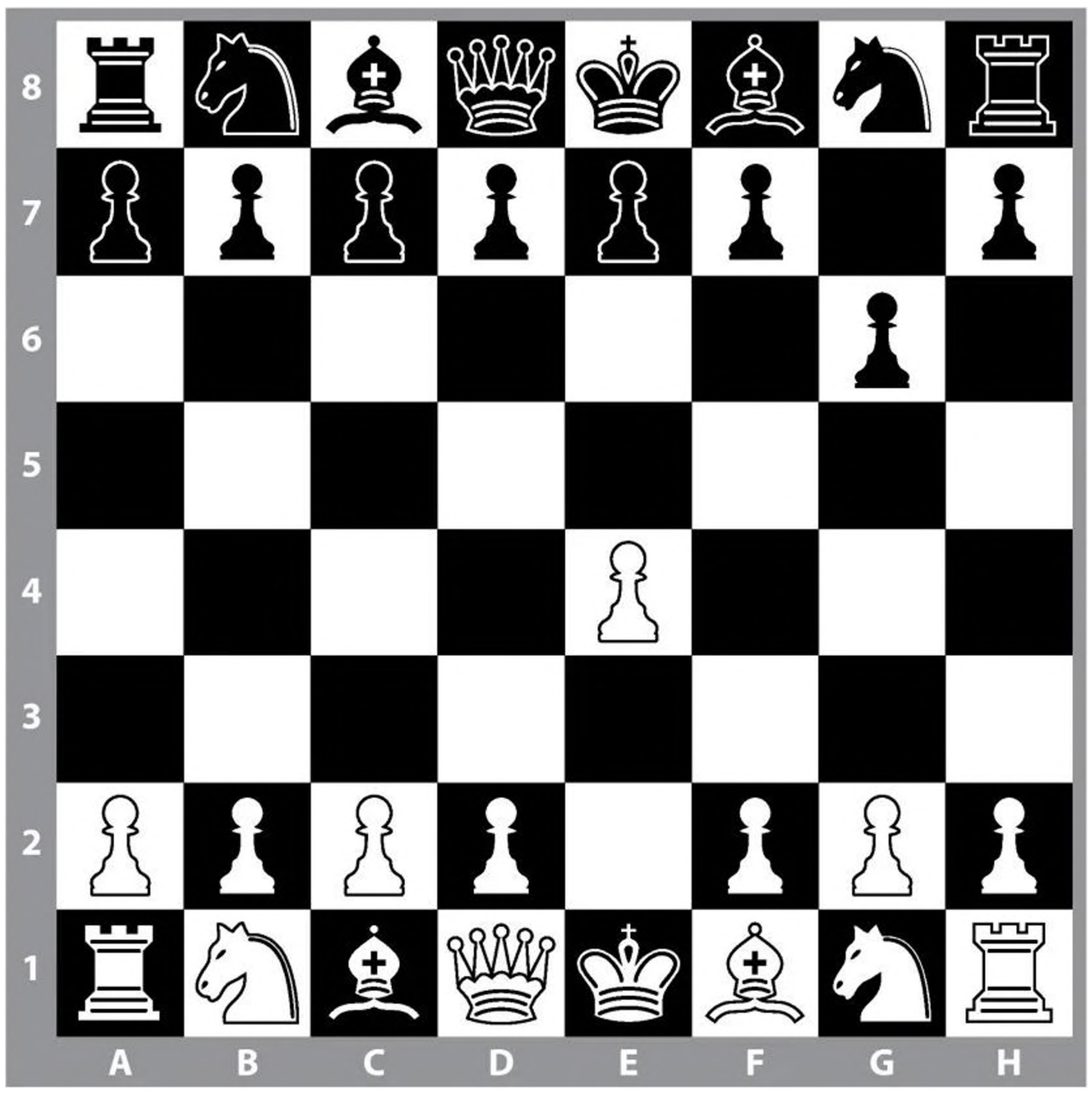


Safe and sound
The fact that both sides have castled means that the middle ground will take up much of the attention in the initial stages

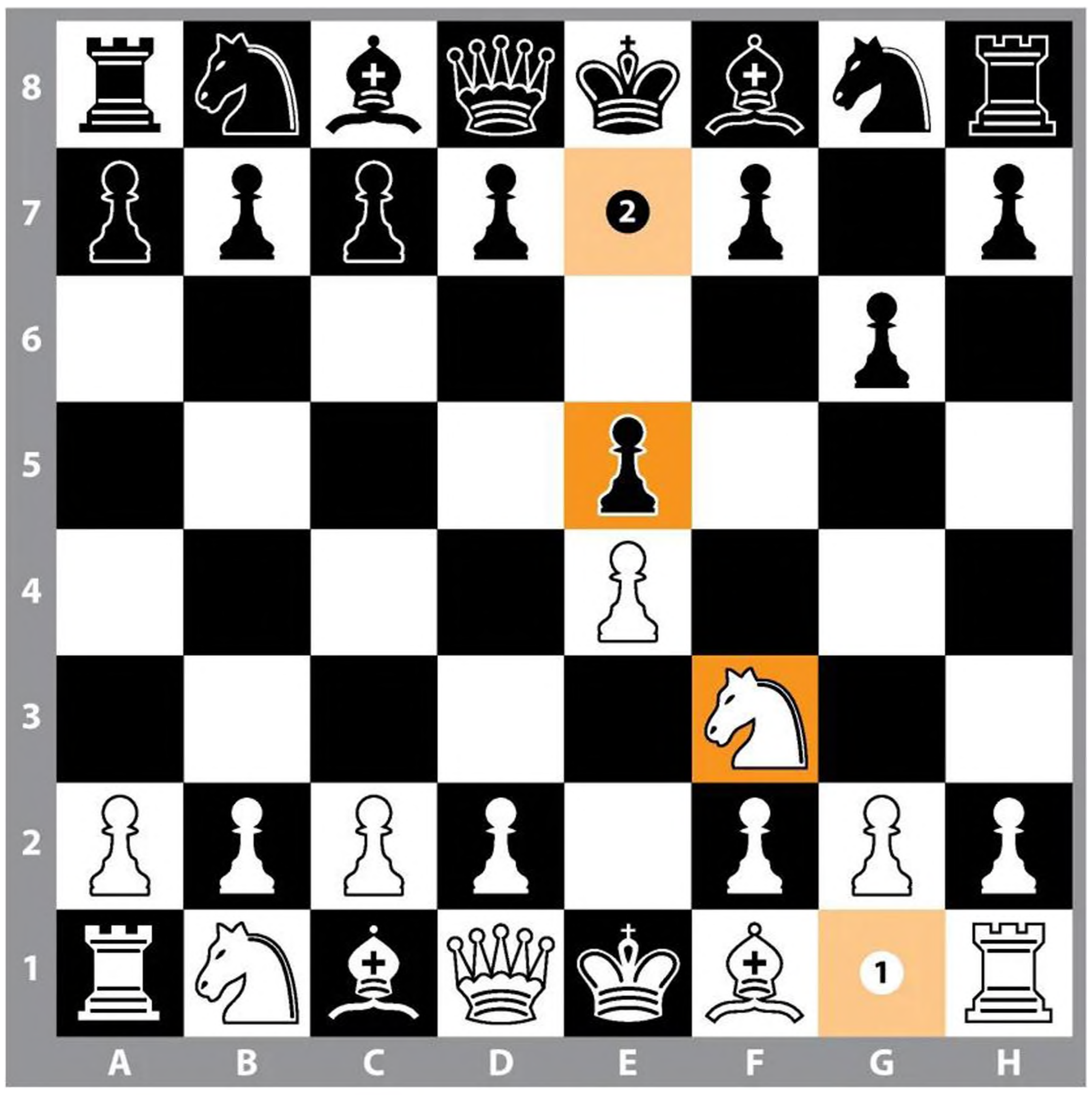
So similar
You will often see at the start of games that many pieces mirror each other, which means that someone needs to make the first strike

A small gap
In black's situation, there is a small gap which white could potentially exploit, but it is still relatively safe at this time

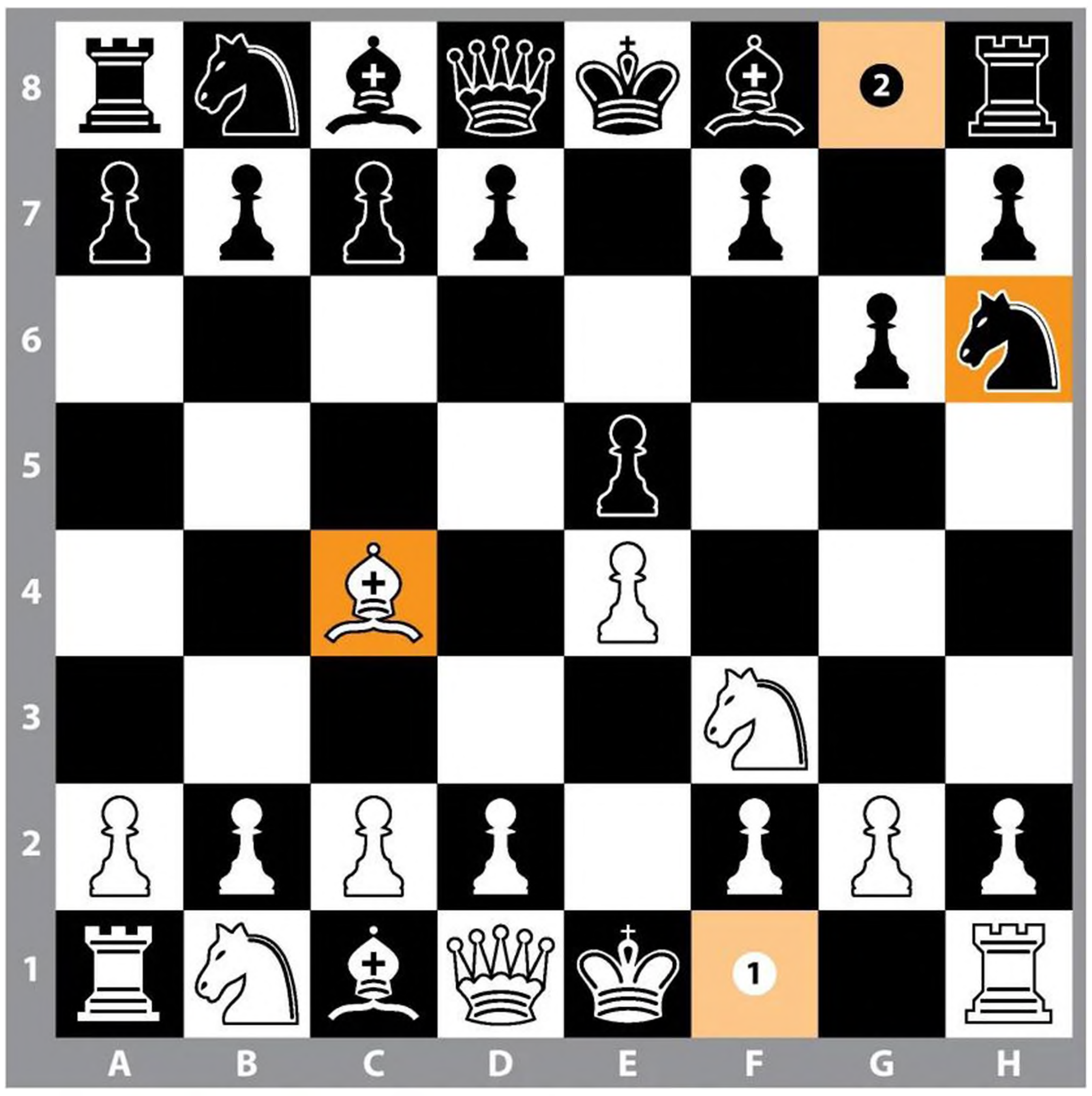
A classic castling
White has engineered a classic castling here with three pawns and the rook protecting the king. This is difficult to penetrate



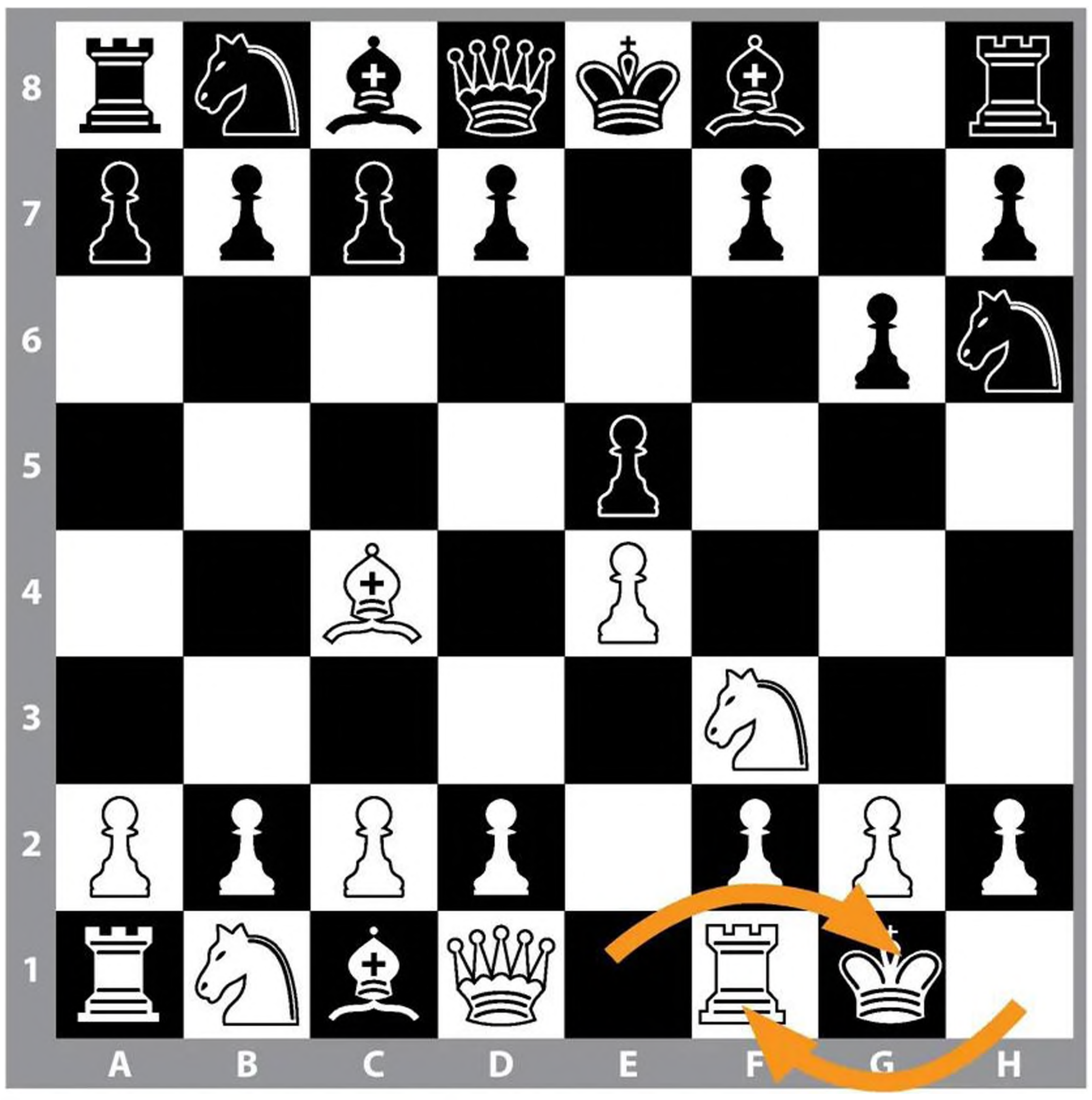
01: The first moves Both black and white have made their initial moves. White has left three pawns in the corner whereas black has not. An immediate differentiation.



02: The next step White has opted to bring the knight(1) into play and black has moved a pawn(2) to the centre of the board. White is closer to castling at this early stage.

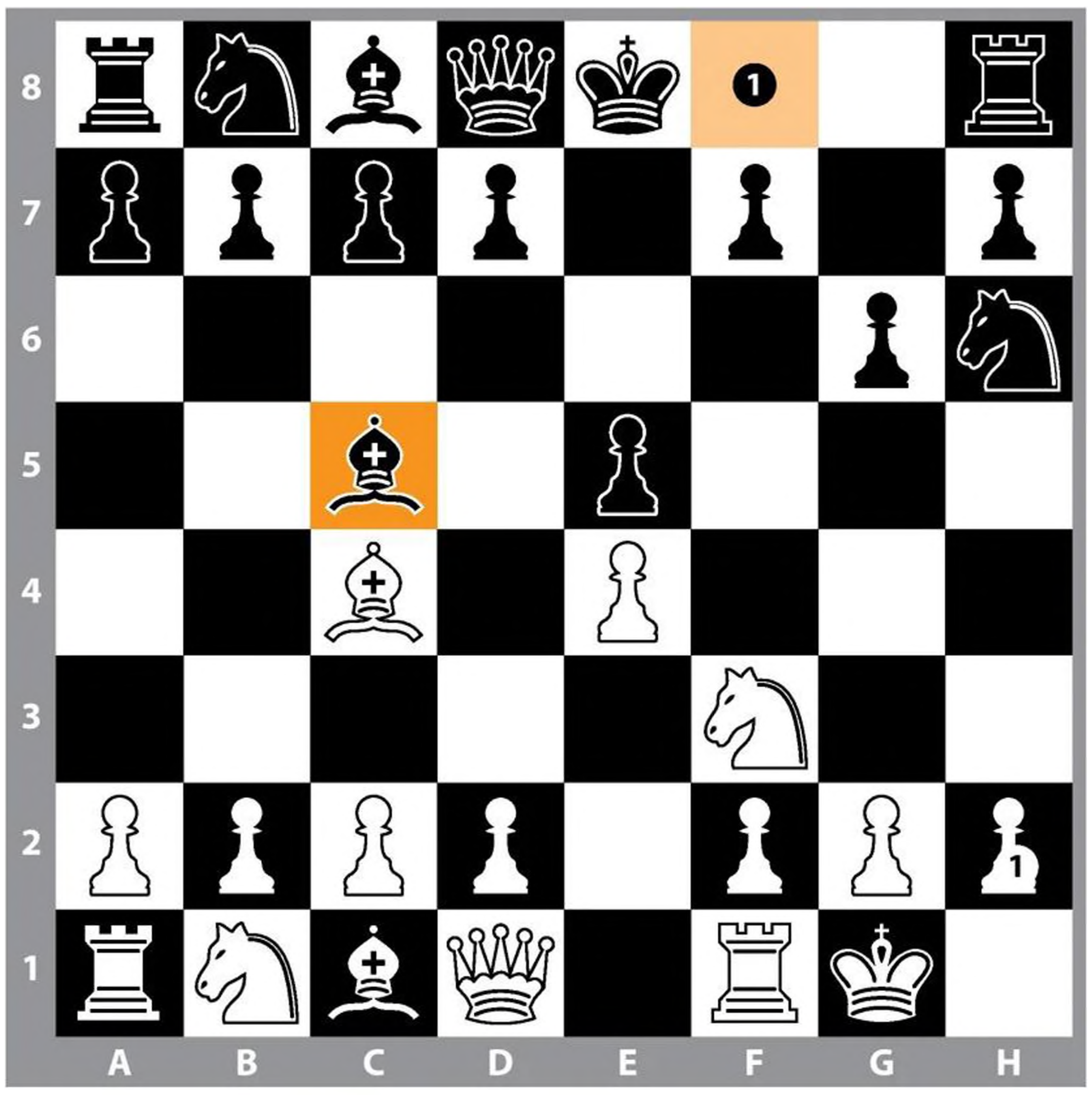


03: A free king White⁽¹⁾ has freed the king to allow a castling manoeuvre while black is moving to an unusual ploy of bringing the knight⁽²⁾ out in front of the rook.

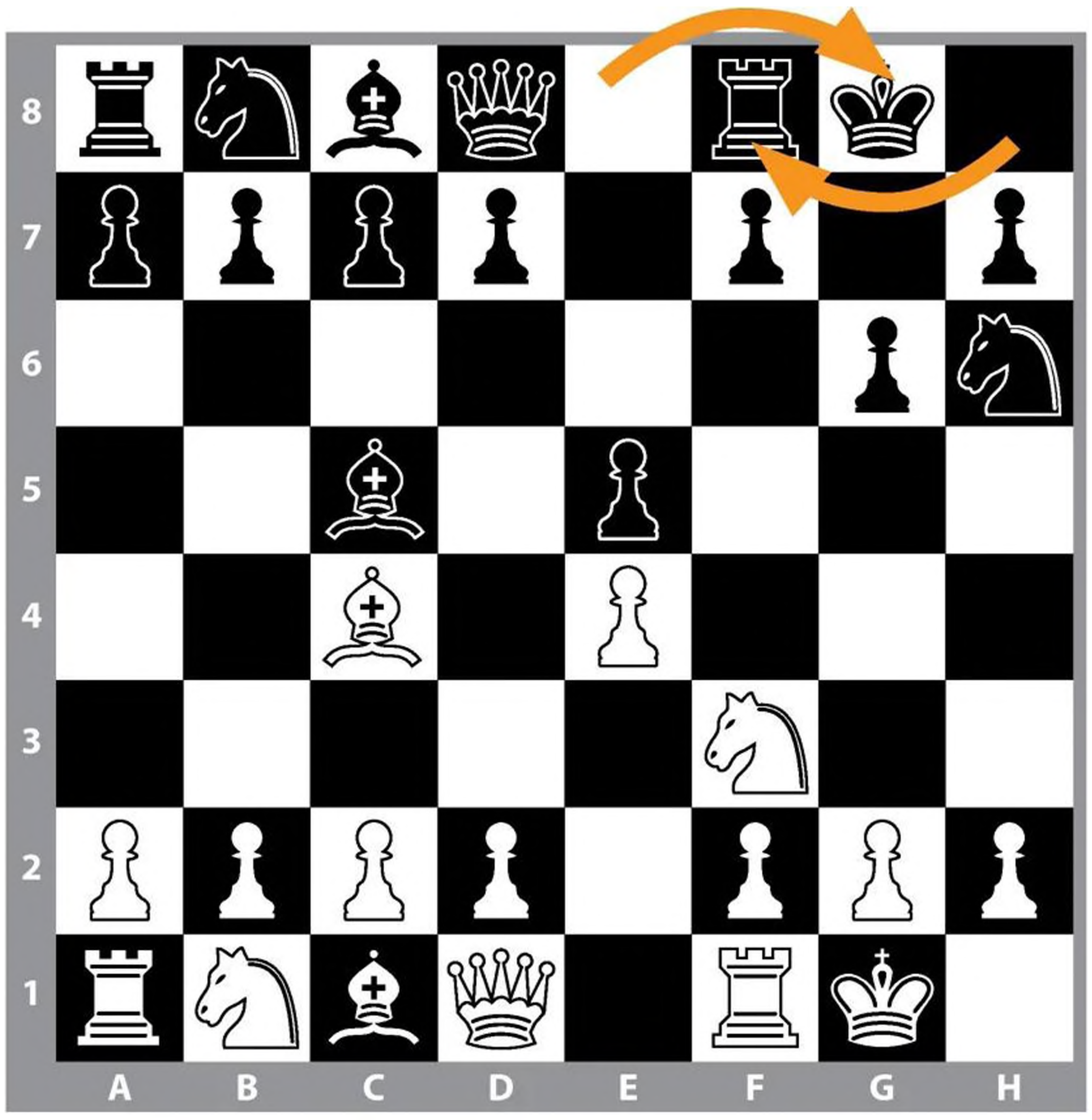


04: The castling White has now castled the king and is also protecting the position with the three unmoved pawns in front of it. A decent early defensive situation.

> "With three pawns and the rook protecting the king, this is difficult to penetrate"



05: Black follows suit Black has now also seen the opportunity to castle and has moved the bishop⁽¹⁾ out into an attacking position. The king and rook are now free to move.



06: Almost duplicate castling Both sides have now castled, but there is a slight difference in their positions. For the time-being, however, their kings are fairly well protected.

Forks

Get to grips with one of the most effective and attacking moves in chess. Timed correctly, it can change the course of a game

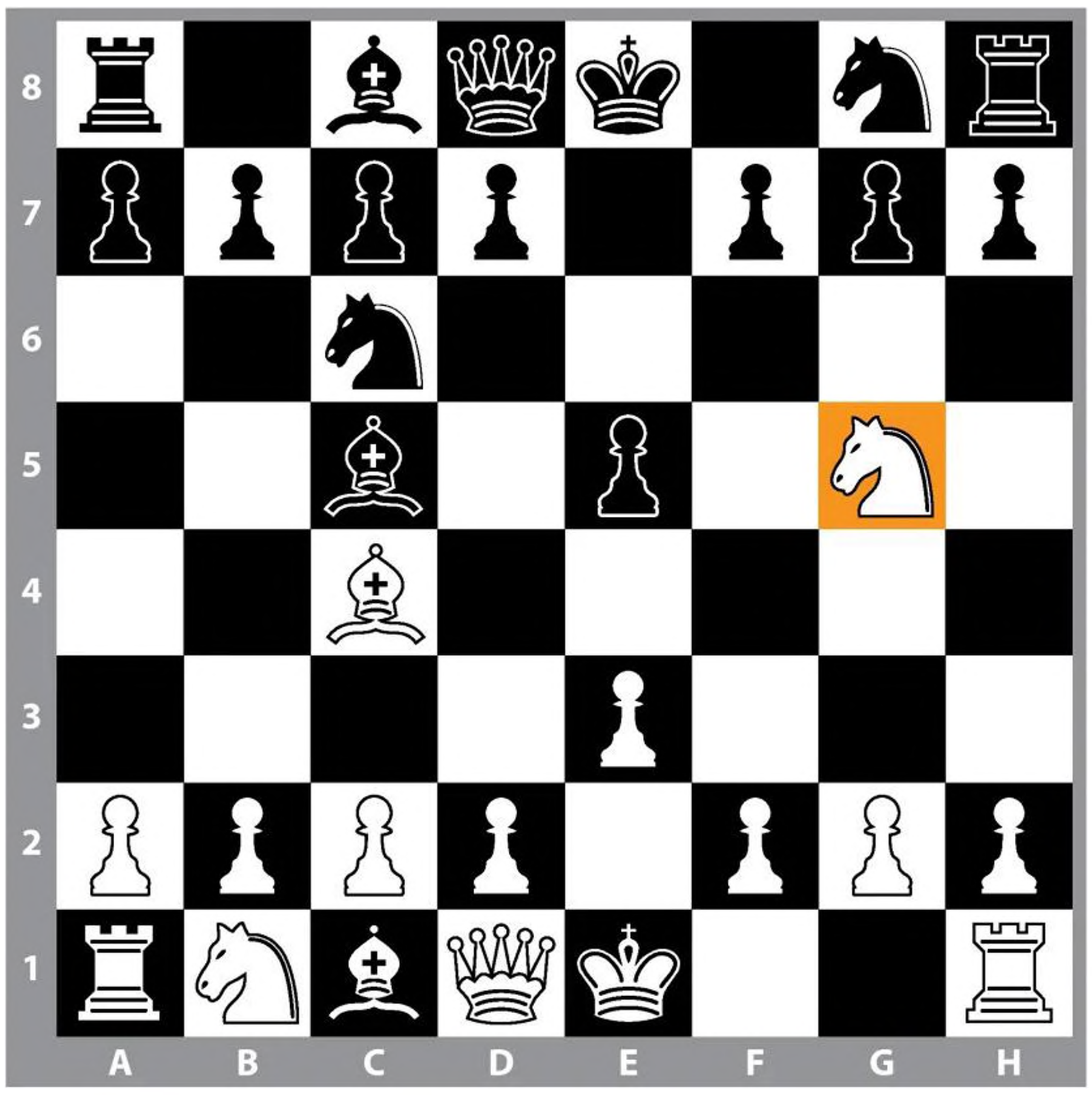
Top tip

A possible fork escape

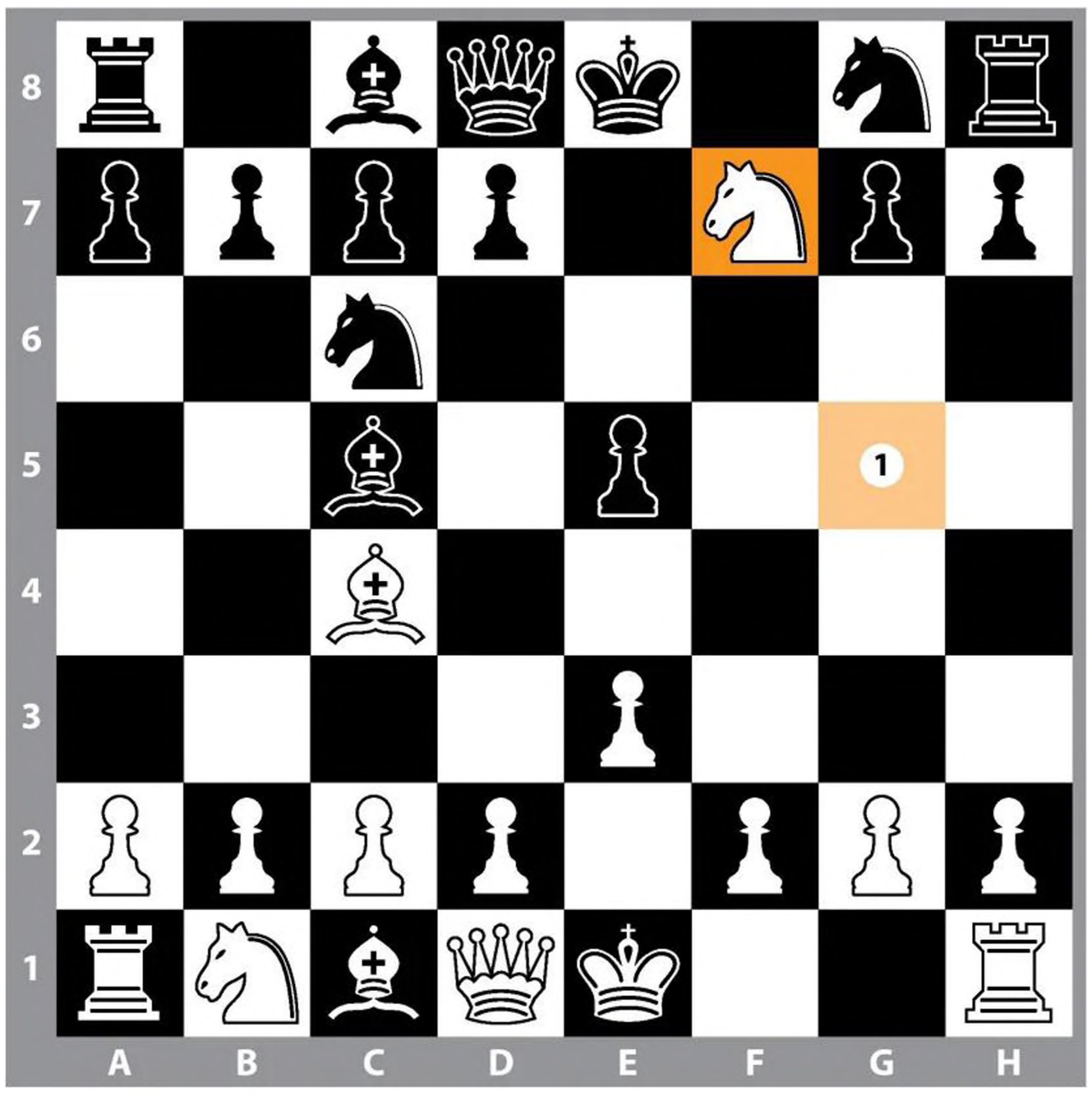
If your queen is forked and you can use it to check the opposing king, this could give you an extra move in which you are able to save your second forked piece. It's rare, but it can happen.

The fork is a move designed primarily to help you to win a piece from your opponent by attacking two pieces simultaneously. It is a move that can be used by any piece on the board, but as with every area of chess, some pieces are much more effective at forking than others. To create a fork, you need to move one of your pieces so that it is positioned to take one of two pieces. At this point your opponent will have some options open to them, but if you have used the fork effectively, they may have to sacrifice the lower-value piece to preserve the higher. For example, if your knight is moved to attack the rook and the queen at the same time, your opponent will likely have to sacrifice the rook, which is already a high-value piece. The queen will be safe and with some forks your opponent may be able to save their queen and move it to a position which means that they can protect the rook from your knight as well. In this situation, however, using the lower-value knight against two higher-value pieces will still work for you because you can take the rook and sacrifice your knight to the queen. For forks, the knight is a very advantageous piece to use because it is less likely that your opponent will be able to save one piece and then move to a position to take your knight. Rooks, for example, are less effective at forking because they can only move horizontally or vertically and there will be many more occasions when your opponent will be able to save the situation, but the key to effective forking is planning ahead and taking account of every possibility. The main advantage of forking is that it often creates a positive outcome.

> "Move a piece so it is positioned to take one of two pieces"



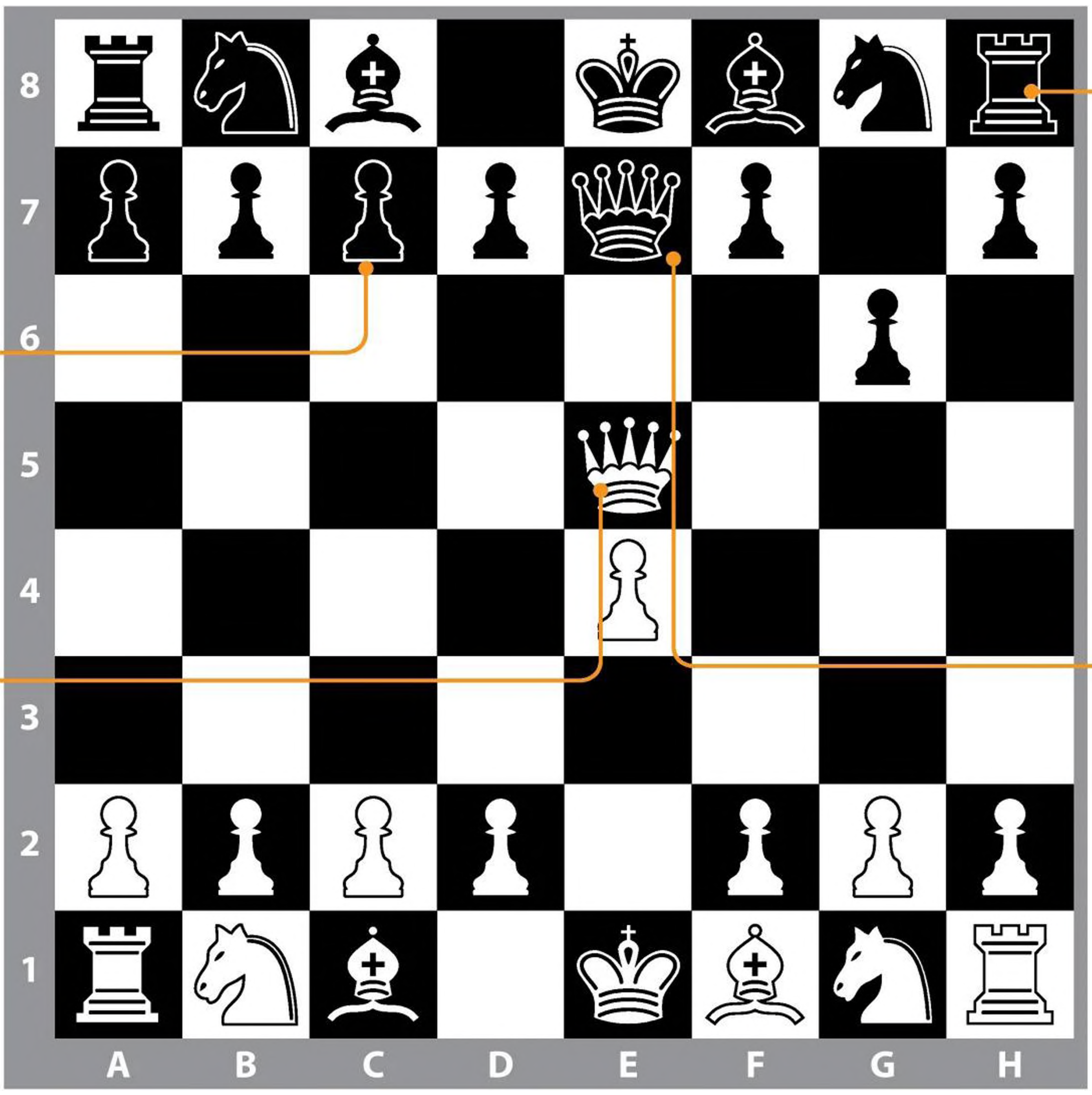
01: The opportunity White's knight is in a prime position to attack both the rook and the queen in just one move. It also needs to move because of the threat from the pawn.



02: The fork move The knight(1) has now taken the pawn and is protected from the king by the bishop. Black now has to move the queen to save it at the start of the game.

A powerful position

Multiple attacks with one piece

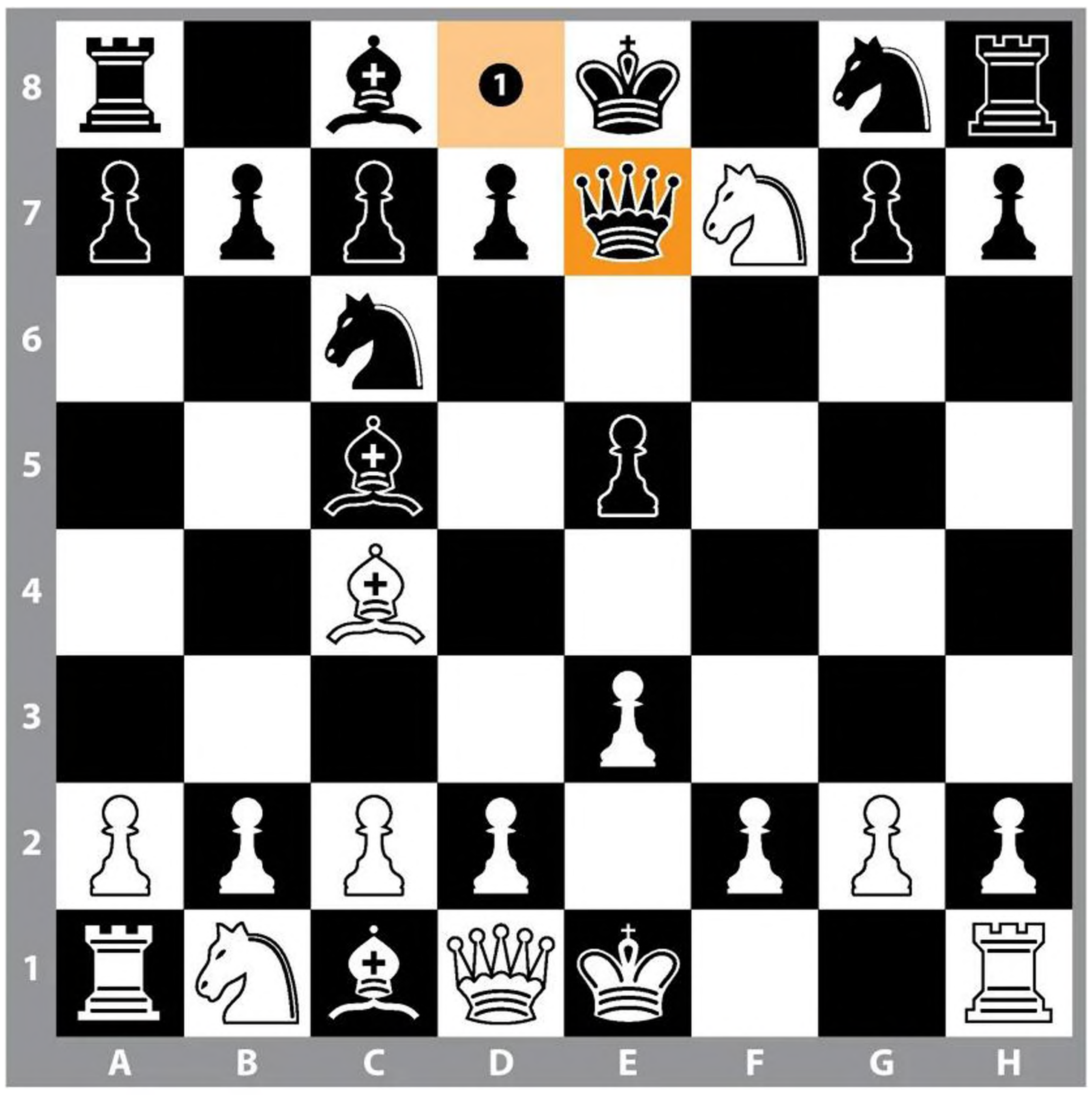


1. The third attack
This situation highlights a fork manoeuvre where three pieces are attacked because the pawn is also under threat from the white queen

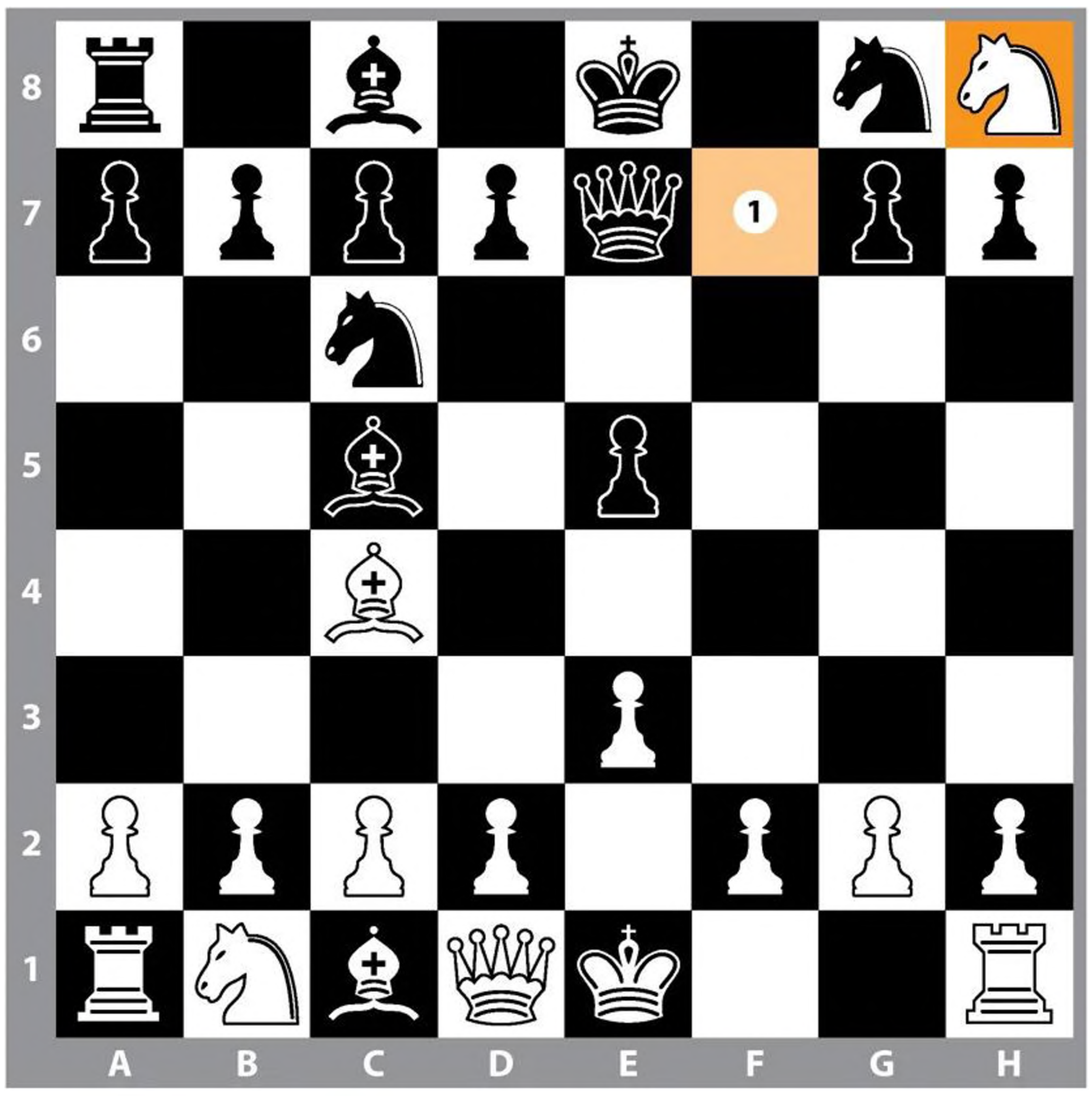
2. The queen in command
The queen is attacking the rook directly and also putting the king in check. The king must take priority and be protected by black

3. A protective move
The black queen is moved to protect the king, but it does leave it in danger. However, white should not take the queen at this time

4. Taking the rook
White will take the rook as it is a high-value piece and the queen will be protected. Taking the black queen would sacrifice itself



03: A safe queen Black has now moved the queen to a safe position which cannot be immediately attacked by white, but the rook is now open to attack from the knight.



04: The rook is gone White can now take the rook and the knight will remain safe for the time-being. It is also in an aggressive position which can be utilised further on.

Pins

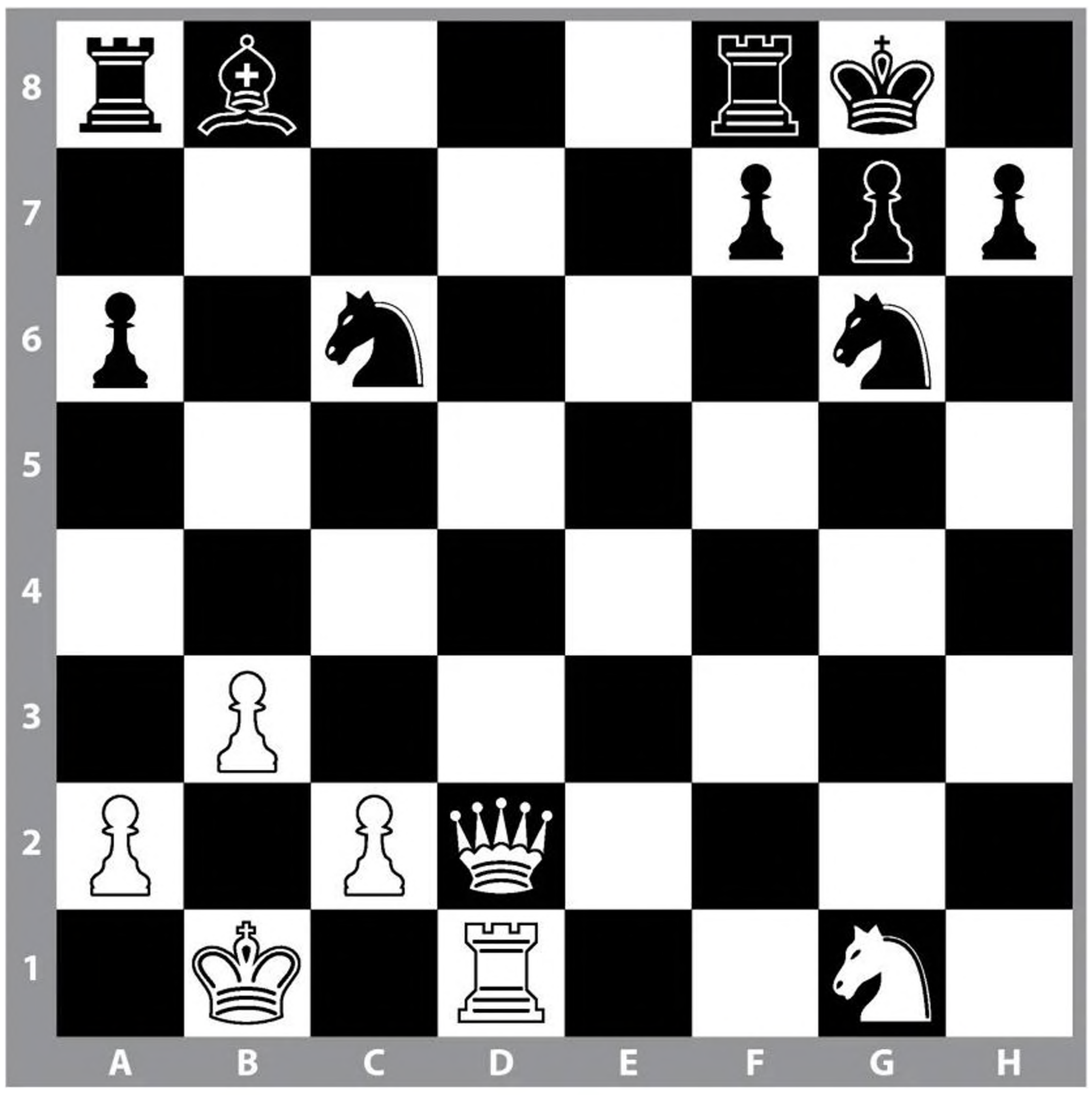
It is important to understand pins because they are common and can occur multiple times within a game, especially near the end

Top tip

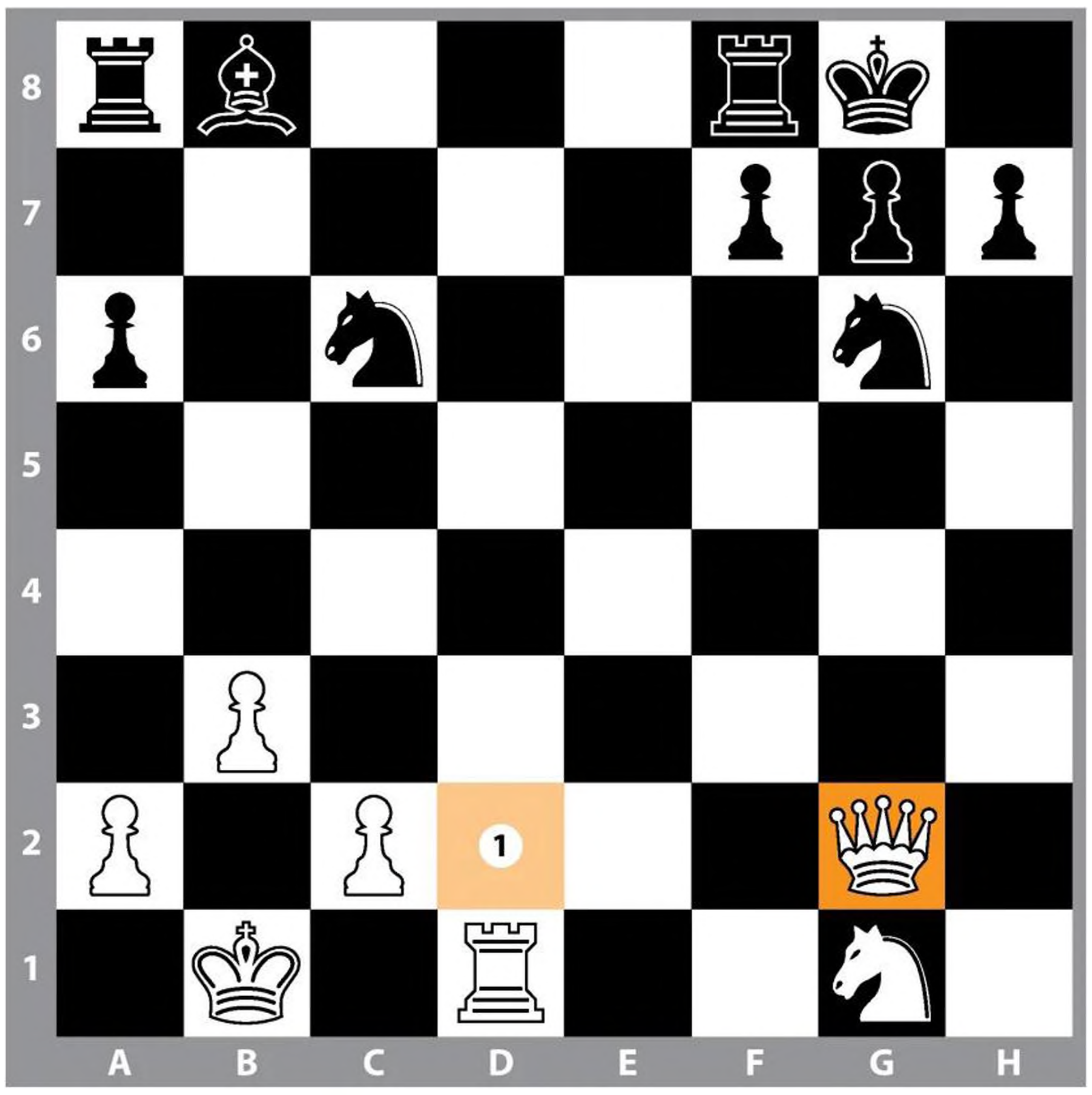
Don't feel trapped When you find yourself in a pin, the very first thing to do is look for an escape using the pinned piece. If you can stop it being attacked and also protect the target piece, the pin will not succeed.

A pin is used for a variety of reasons and is effective in capturing pieces using diversion methods and also for potentially destabilising your opponent's game plan. A pin will almost always cause a piece to be trapped because it has to protect a higher-value piece which is the ultimate target. This is extremely effective because the natural course of action is to protect and not look for an attacking outcome. Indeed, it is difficult to attack from a pinned position, but it is often possible to protect both pieces if circumstances allow and to not give away an advantageous position at the same time. We will demonstrate how pins are created and also offer an example of how they can be escaped, but of course every position is different and that is why it is important to plan ahead. If you are learning chess, it is wise to understand the basics first, but if you can reach a point where you can see far enough ahead to avoid being pinned in the first place, you are well on the way to being a good player. Pins can highlight a lack of planning, a missed moment earlier in the game or too much emphasis on attack and not enough on protecting your valuable pieces. Also, try to avoid thinking that a pin is designed purely to capture a valuable piece, because on many occasions they are designed to provide a more attacking position for the player who has laid the pin. They are popular because they can occur by design or chance and it is not too difficult to spot a potential pin when it comes your way, with the added advantage that it is trickier to spot a possible pin against you on the horizon. If you can master pins, you are doing well.

> "A pin isn't always designed purely to capture a valuable piece"

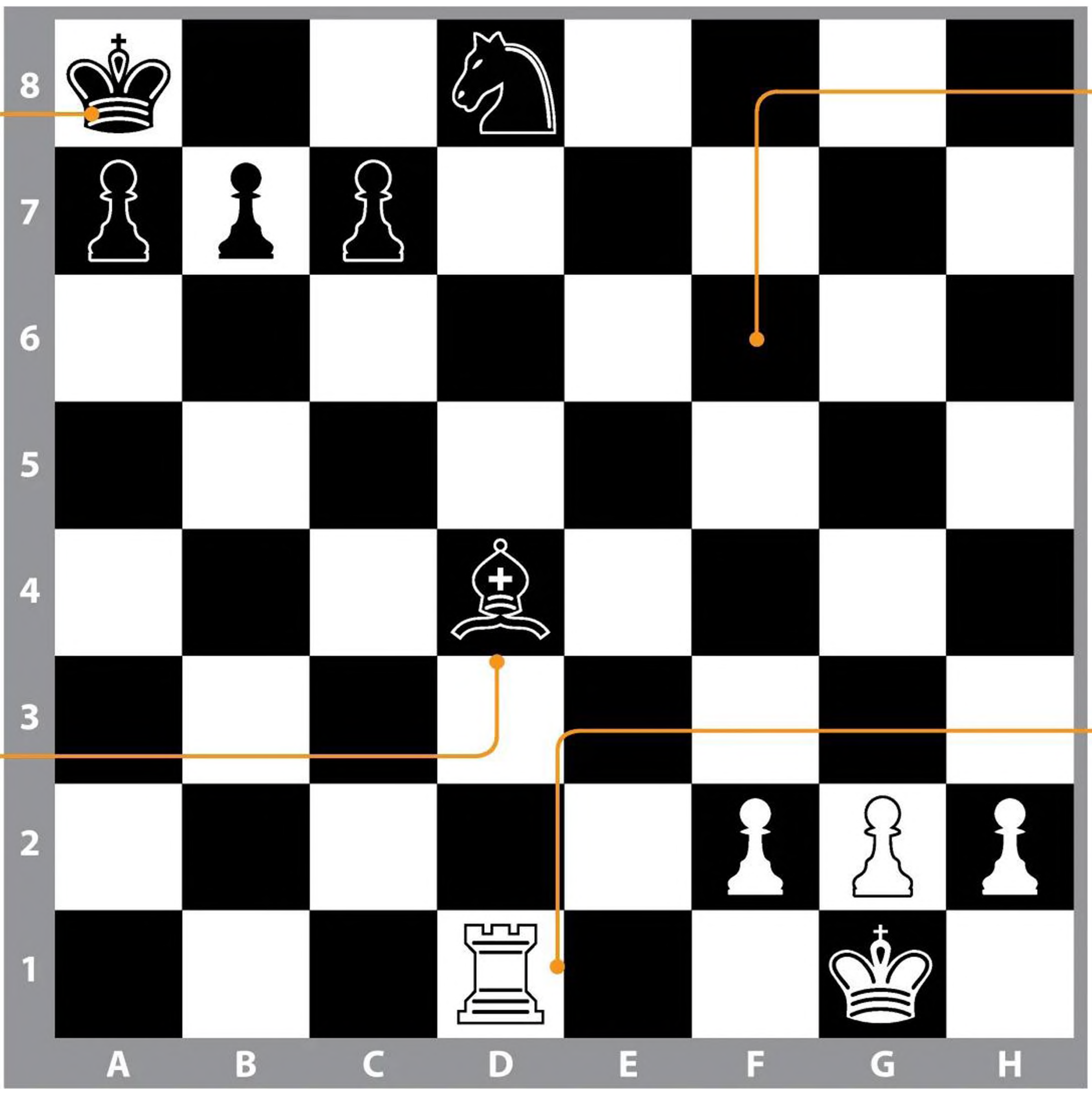


01: See the potential It's white's move and it would be easy to push the queen up the board to attack, but there is much more potential in creating a pin in this position.



02: Create the pin When white(1) is moved to this position, the c6 knight is now pinned and cannot move. If it does, the rook can be taken and this is of a much higher value.

An active pin There is an escape

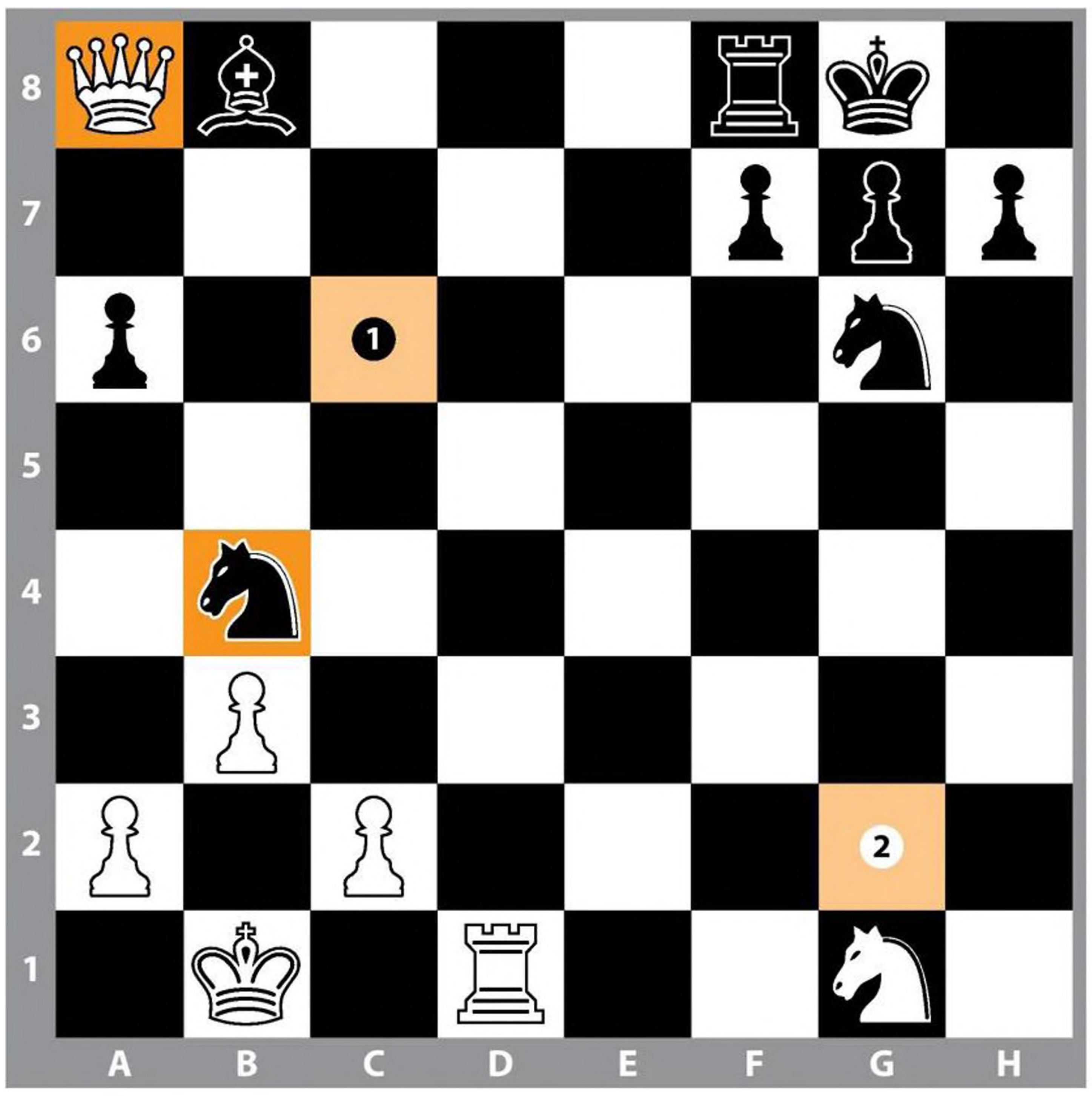


1. The attacker
The rook is currently attacking the bishop and consequently the knight which the bishop has to protect. This is a relative rook pin

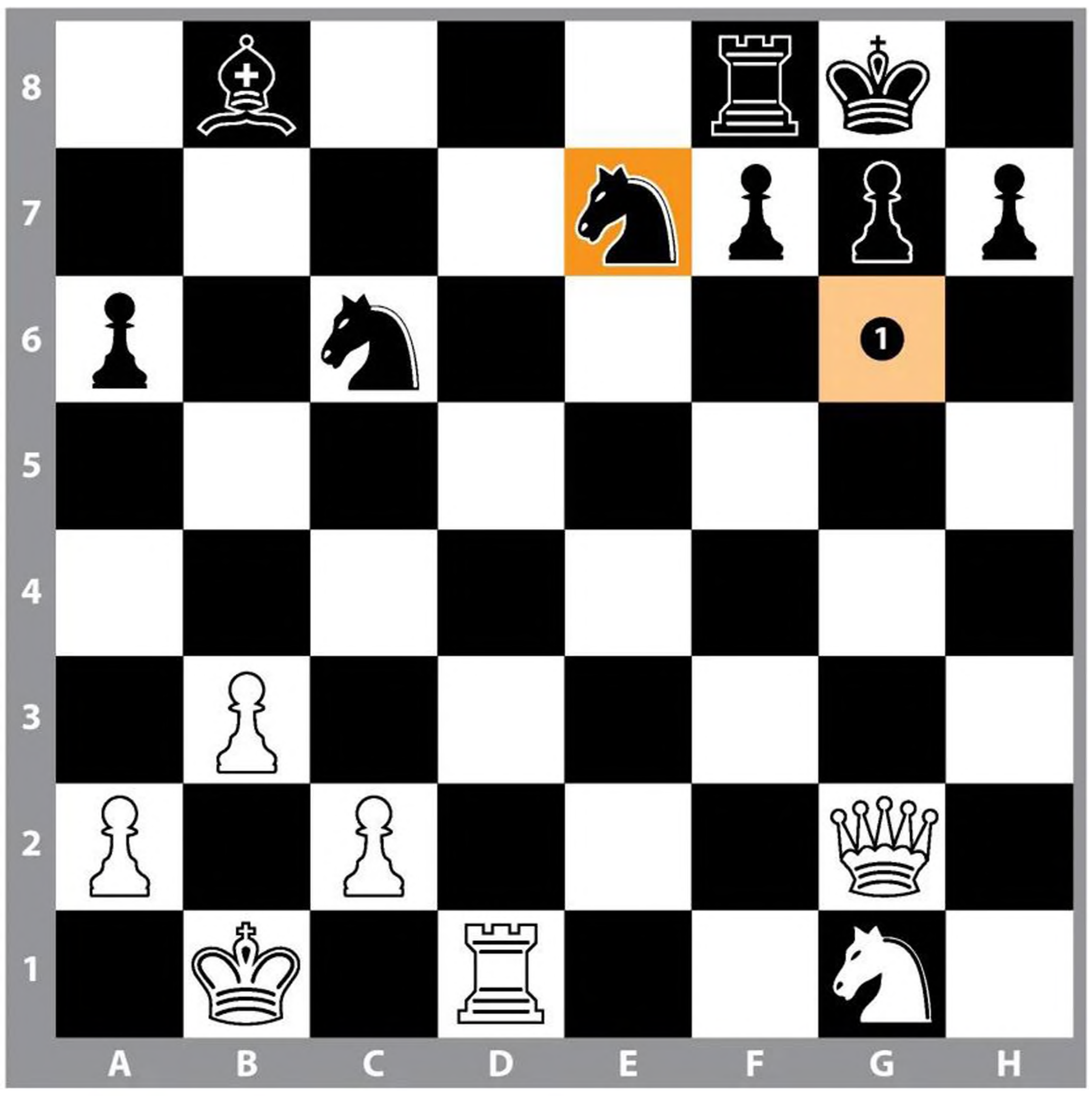
2. Can it move?
In this position, it may look as though the bishop cannot move, but if it doesn't the rook can take it without endangering itself

3. A simple escape
If the bishop moves to this position it will escape immediate capture by the rook and also protect the knight at the same time

4. A protected king
The previous move may also advantageously delay the rook, which is obviously the most powerful piece in play, moving up the board



03: A bad move If the knight(1) is moved, white can move the queen(2) and take the rook without endangering the queen. This also puts the queen in a more attacking position.



04: Time to protect Alternatively, if black leaves the knight where it is, the queen can capture it and still attack the rook, so one course of action is to protect the knight(1).

Skewers

A well-played skewer can win a game almost instantly and is particularly effective in the closing stages of a tight encounter

Top tip

Sacrifice to skewer

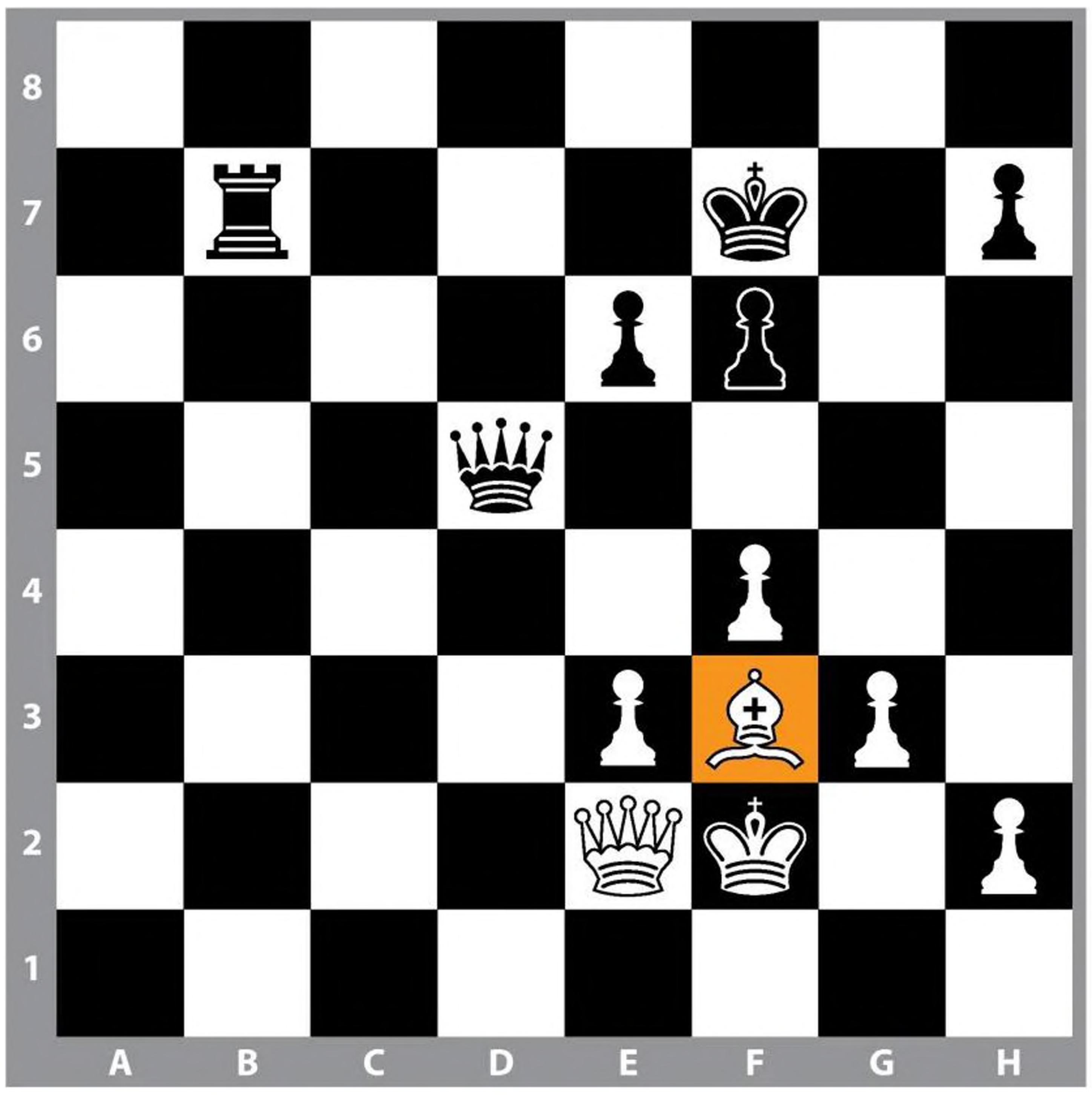
The potential for a skewer to be placed is often obvious to an experienced player, so you may find that you have to sacrifice a piece to bring the situation about and to hide your true intentions.

A skewer, which is also known as an X-ray attack, looks almost identical to a pin at first glance and does follow the same path, but there are different objectives for playing one and potentially lesser chance of escape by your opponent.

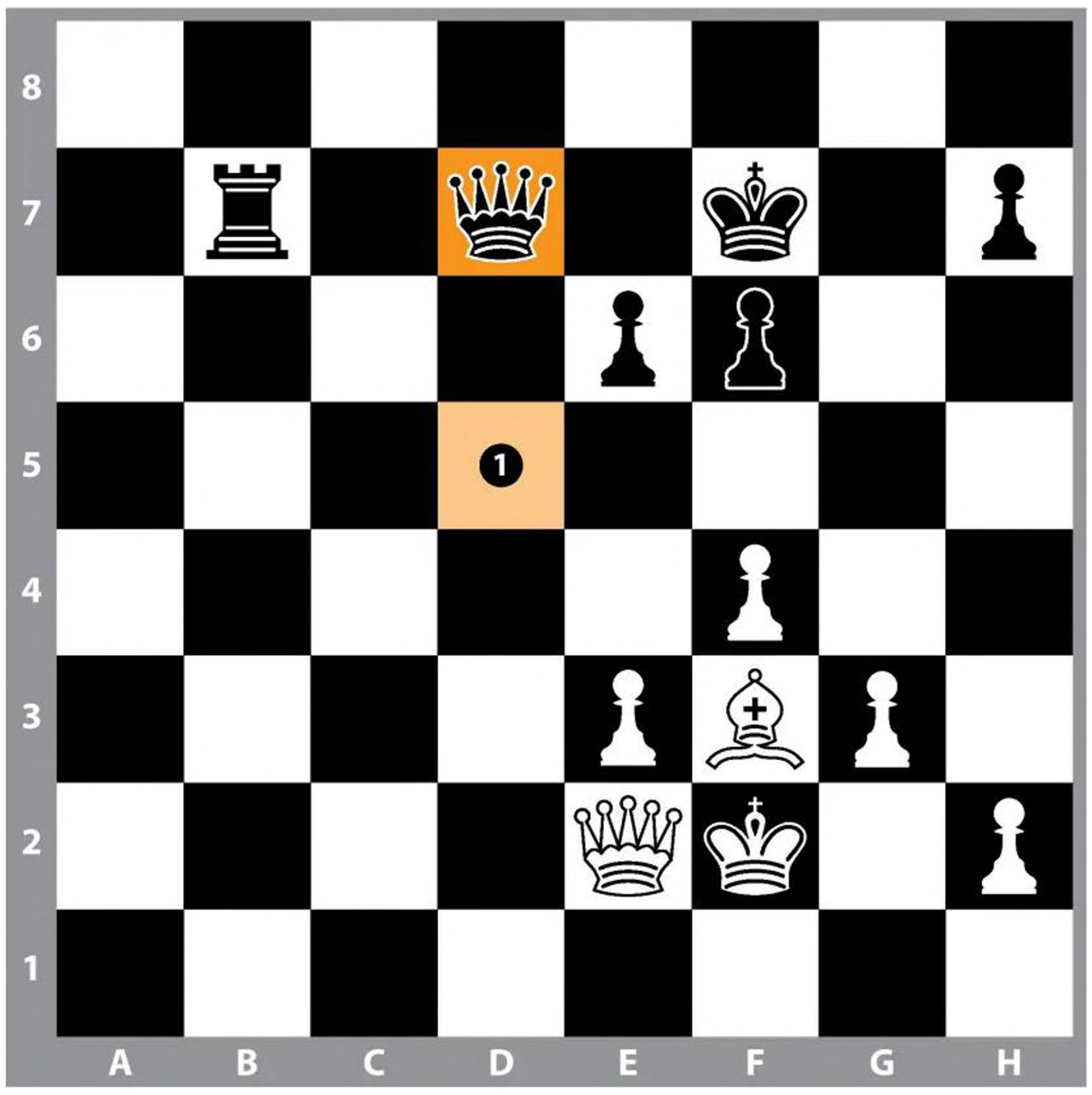
Unlike a pin, the higher-value piece is situated in between the target piece and your attacking piece, which usually means that your opponent has to move it to save it from being captured. Escapes can occur when you can move the first piece to protect the second, but this occurs less frequently when a skewer has been built. So the best tactic, as always, is to think ahead and avoid them being laid in the first place.

There are two types of skewer. The absolute skewer puts the king in check and so it absolutely has to be moved or another piece placed in the path. The second type is the relative skewer, which means that your opponent can accept the loss of the piece being attacked if they so wish. Skewers are most effective when a king is being attacked by a long-range piece such as a rook which could consequently then take the queen if the king cannot move to protect it. This is more likely at the end of the game and will often signal a win for the player placing the skewer. Indeed, in normal play, only long-range pieces are able to skewer thanks to their greater coverage, which adds even greater value to the bishop, queen and rook as the game nears the end of natural play. The potential to skewer with one of these pieces is always lurking if your opponent slips up and misses the threat it could pose. Skewers are fairly obvious to both sides, but if you get a chance, make sure you take it and you will recognise the potential as you gain experience.

> "In normal play, only long-range pieces are able to skewer"

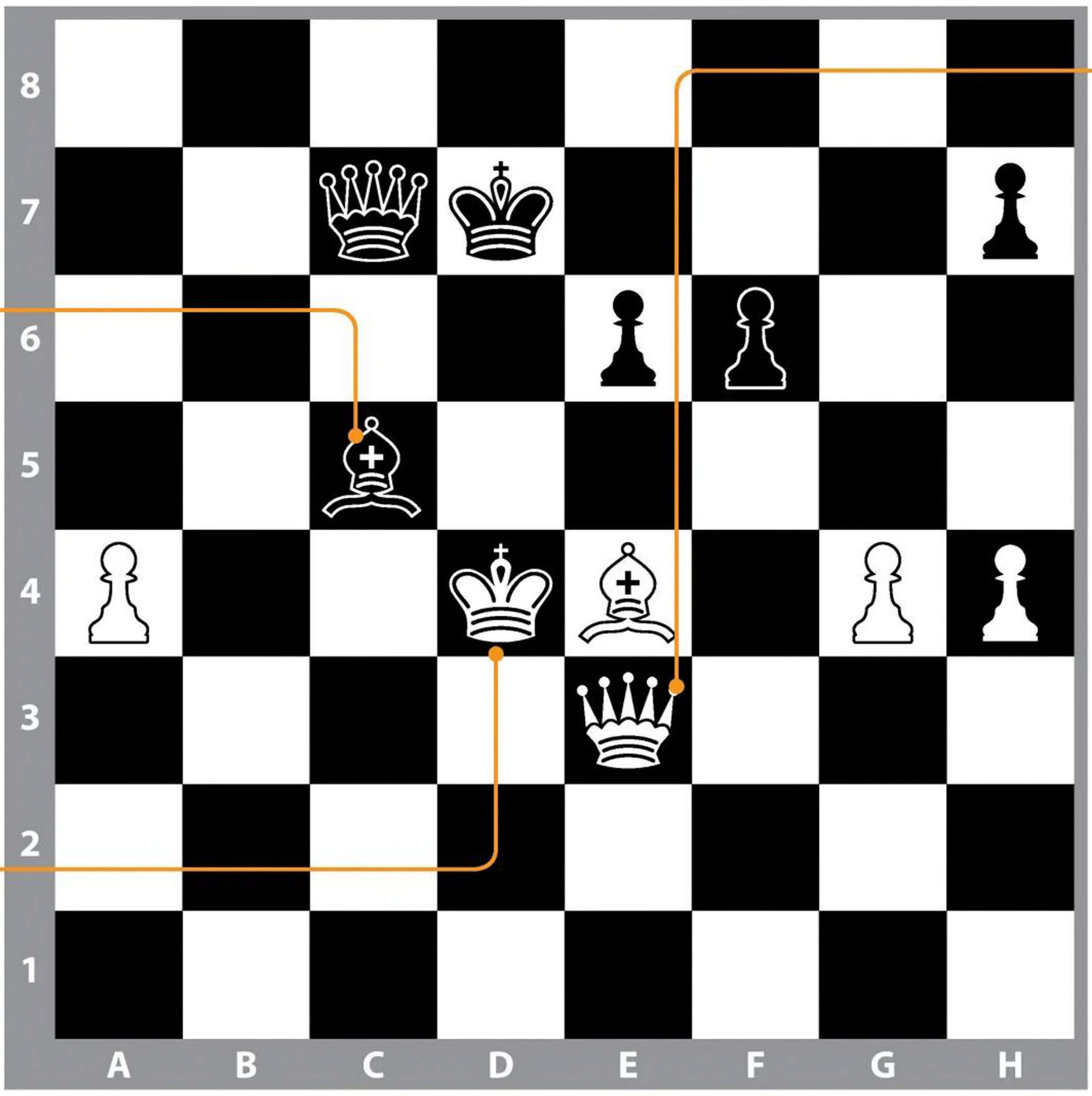


01: A skewer in play The white bishop is attacking the black queen and consequently the rook as well. Black will have to move the queen to avoid immediate capture by white.



02: Protecting the queen Black can protect the queen⑴ by moving to this position, but white can still capture the rook and only lose the lower-value bishop. A worthy trade.

An absolute skewer A strong position

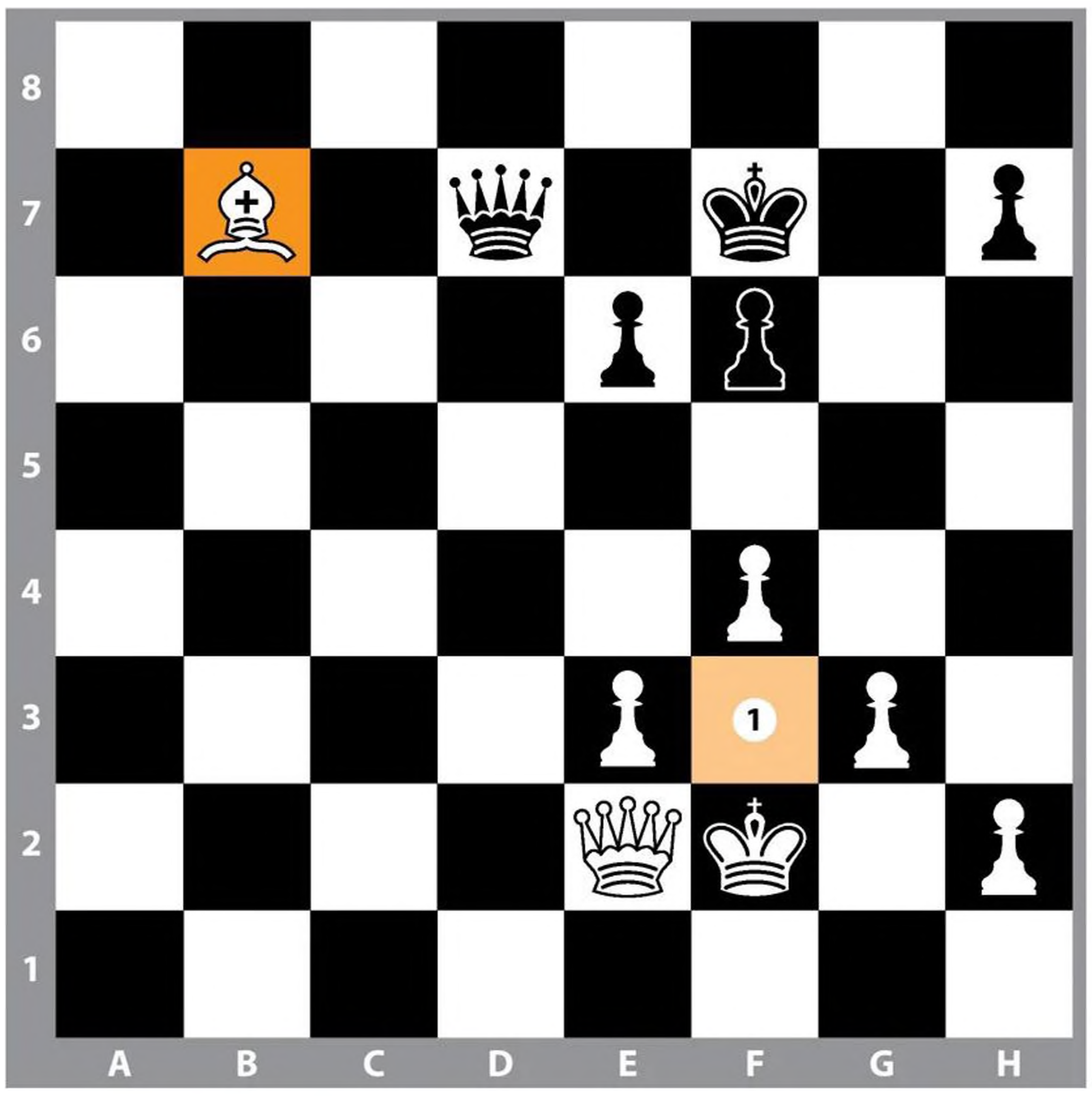


1. Difficult for white
Black's bishop has skewered the white queen and king and is now in a strong position near the end of the game. White has to move

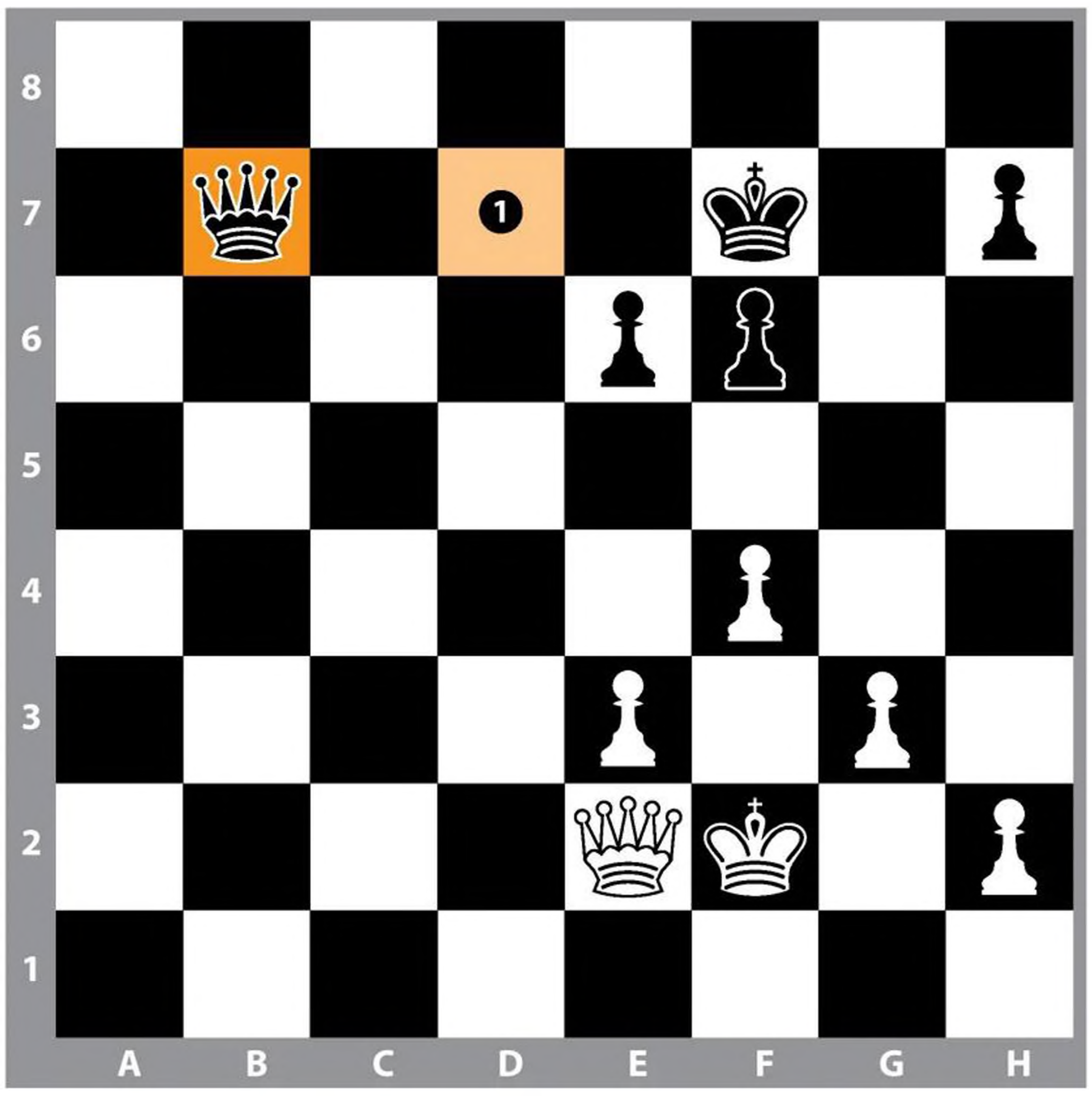
2. Save the king
White now has no choice, but to move the king because it is in check. There is only one square (d2) to which it can move to stop another attack

3. A lost queen
Once the king is moved, the black bishop can take white's queen. Even if the king takes the bishop, it is a worthy trade for black

A STRONGER POSITION
Black is now in a stronger position because it has a queen and white does not, which should mean that the game will be won soon.



03: The lost rook White's bishop(1) has now taken the rook and left black in a weakened position. Black ideally needed two high-value pieces to win the game quickly.



04: Queen takes bishop Black has now taken the bishop and the game is fairly even, but the loss of the rook is a body blow and highlights the power of a well-played skewer.

Batteries

Despite some differing views on what exactly a battery is in chess, they are very effective and can turn a game very quickly

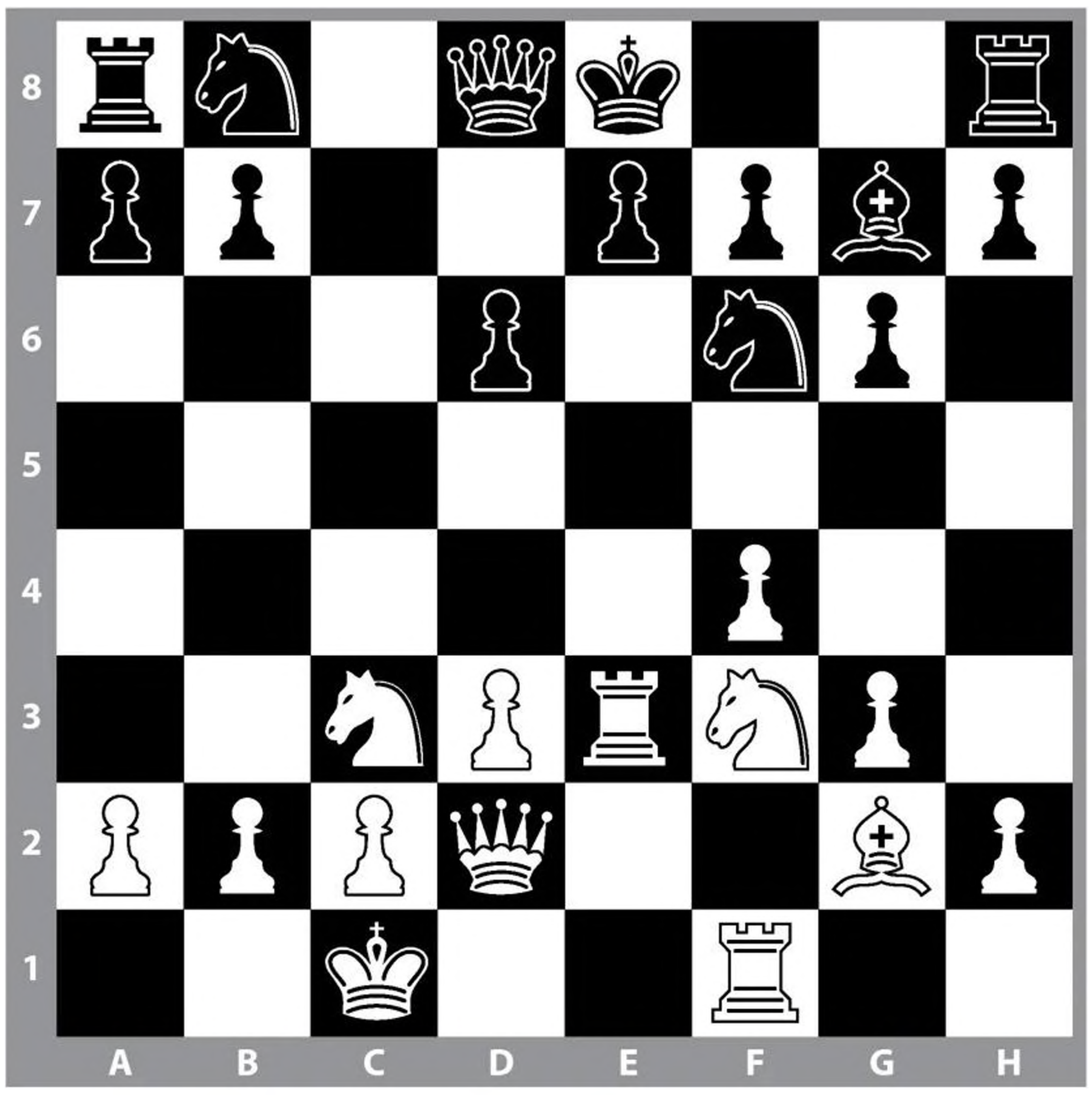
Top tip

Rooks are common

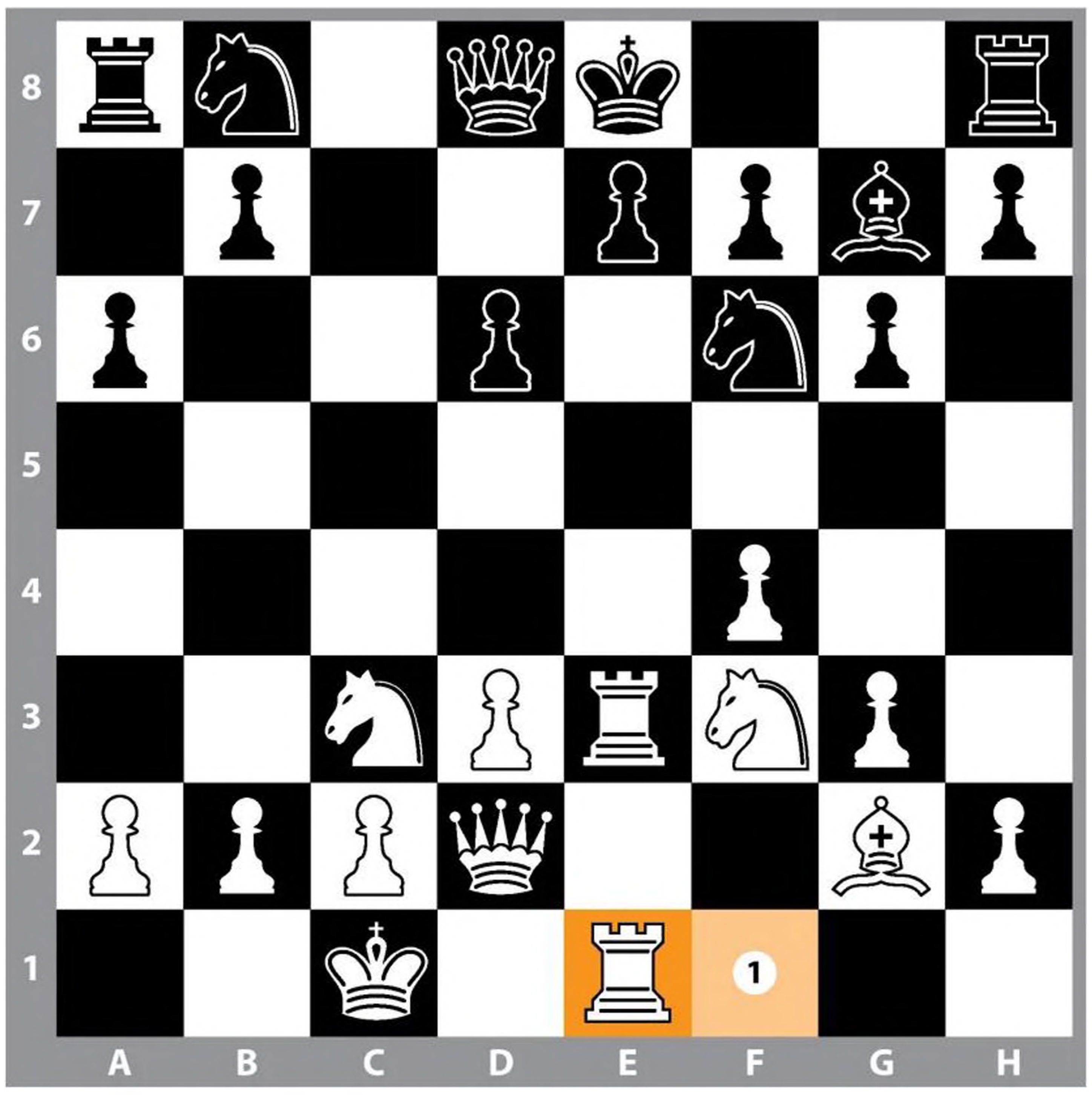
Rooks are most commonly used to form batteries because they can easily occupy the same rank on the board and you already have two. Almost all batteries will be formed from two rooks, for obvious reasons.

The exact definition of a battery remains unclear because various authorities on the game have differing opinions on what constitutes one, but we will attempt to make it clear to you. A battery is unusual in that it requires the use of more than one piece, but it is extremely effective in achieving a forceful position when you may otherwise have few opportunities. The easiest way to describe a battery is with rooks – which are, incidentally, the ideal pieces for this move. Imagine two rooks in a row with a pawn in front of a queen ahead of them. The first rook can take the pawn and be protected from the queen by the rook that is situated behind it. This is a classic battery which uses the power of both pieces together to force an unwanted move from your opponent or a much stronger position which is hard to defend against. A promoted pawn to a queen is even more effective when used with another queen, but bishops can also be used if a pawn has been under-promoted and one of your original bishops remains on the board. It is easier, however, to form batteries using pieces that can move horizontally and vertically because this is where most opportunities will naturally come from. Whatever you do, don't let the thought of using the same pieces limit your ambitions. A queen and a rook can form a battery or, even better, two rooks and a queen can form one which is potentially extremely powerful and very difficult to escape from in the right circumstances. Remember that batteries can be used to take pieces, but are perhaps more commonly used in the endgame, when you have more pieces than your opponent, to force a checkmate.

> "A classic battery uses the power of both pieces together"



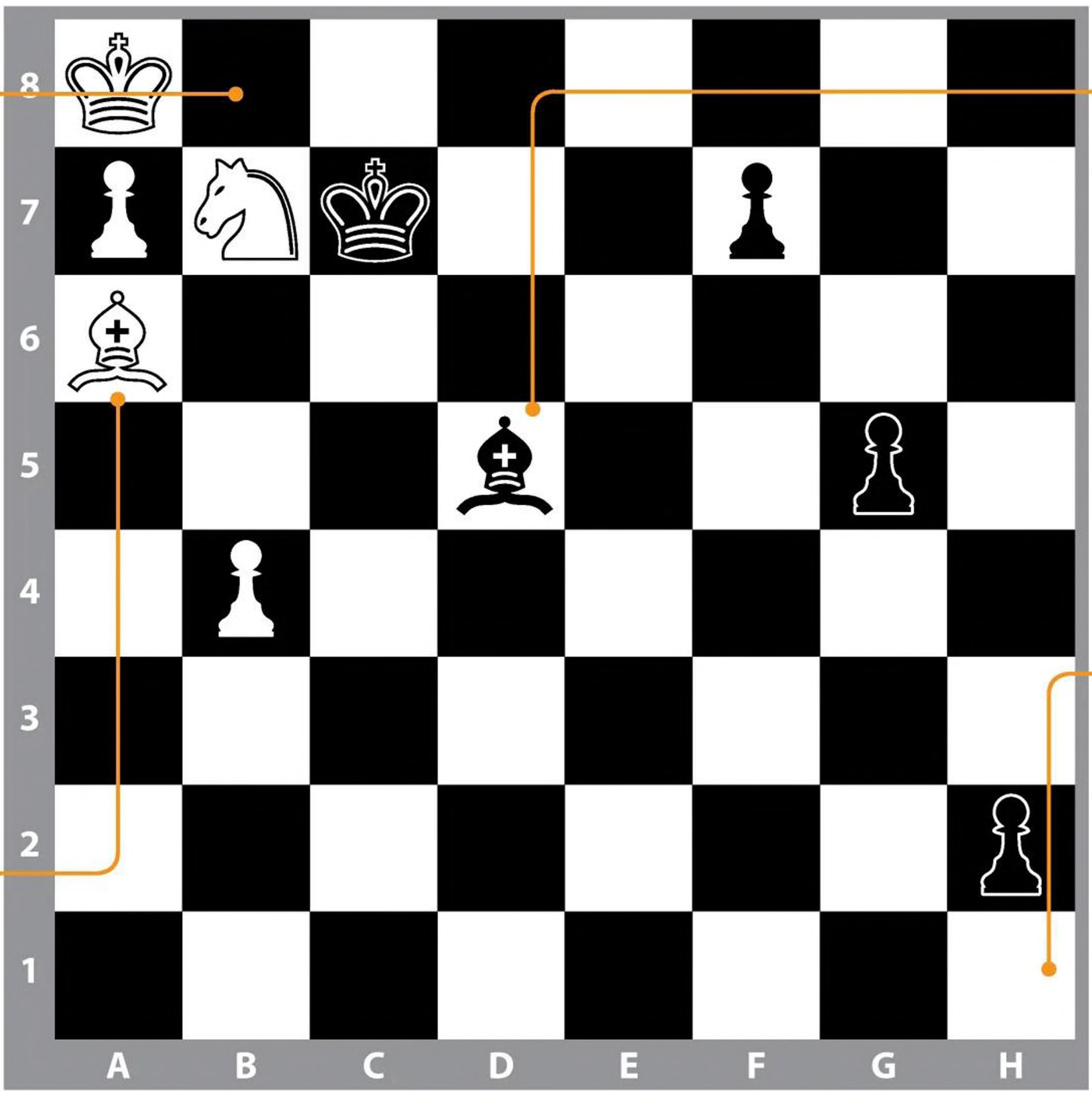
01: Nothing obvious? In this position, the black king is well protected by the pawn, knight and king. There is, however, potential for white to create a powerful battery.



02: A created battery White has now created a battery with two rooks, but the sheer level of protection on the king means that it is not completely effective at this time.

A diagonal battery

Killing the game

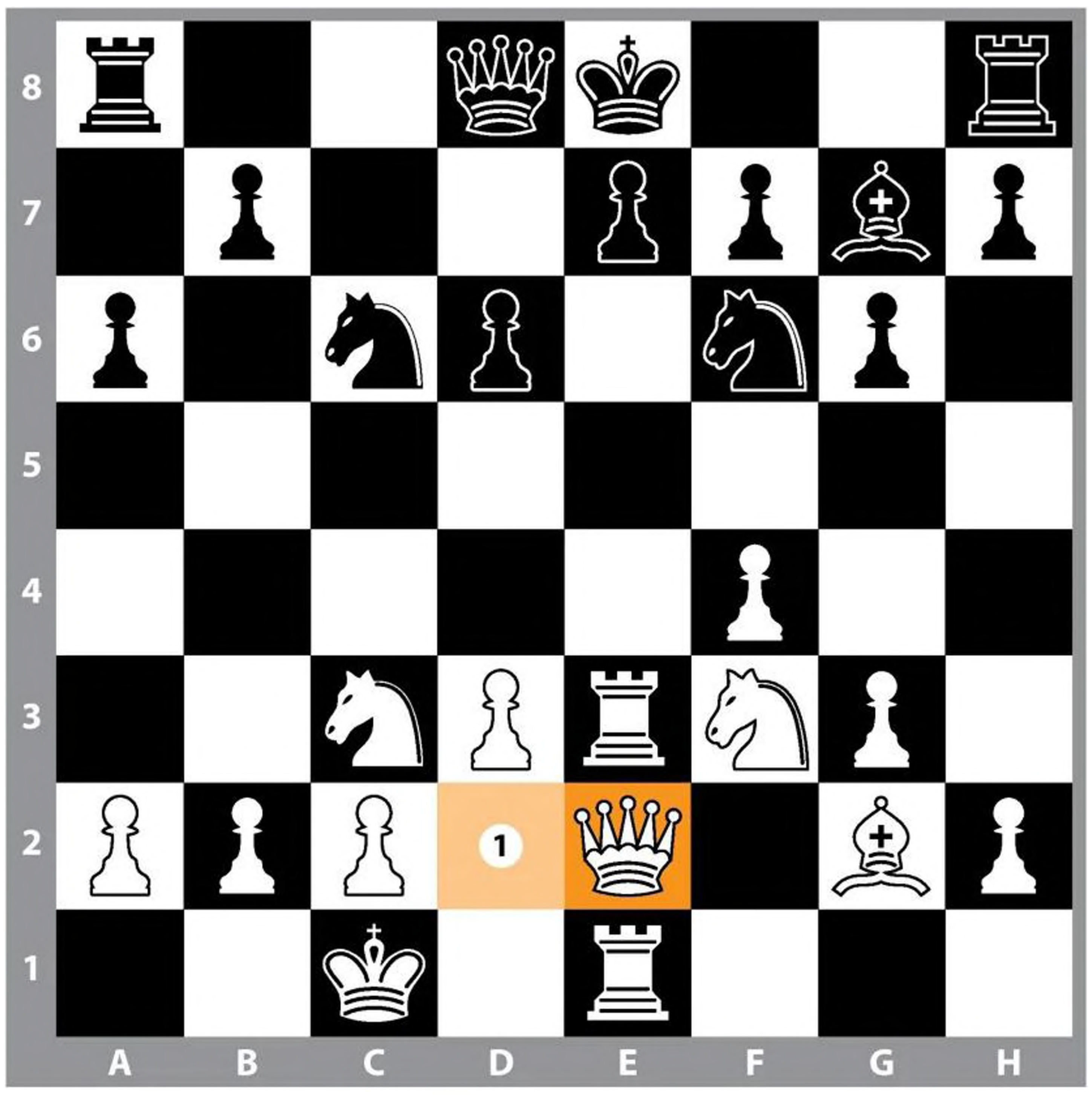


1. The key piece
The bishop is key here because it is attacking the defending white knight and can be backed up in the next move to cause problems

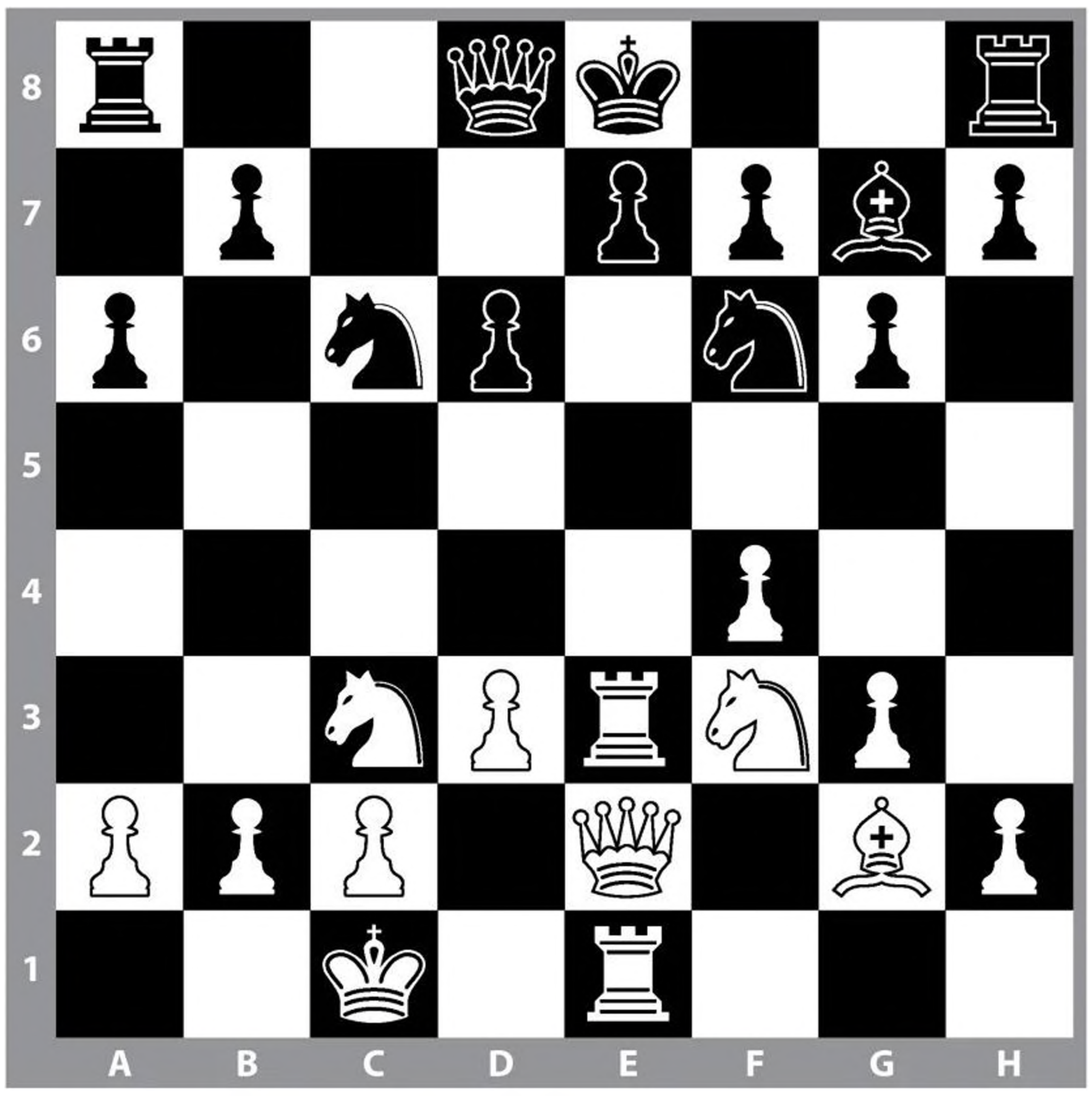
2. The promotion
Black's pawn can be promoted by moving to this square, at which point a bishop – or, even better, a queen – can create a battery

3. Nowhere to go
The white king cannot move to this square because the black king is covering it. It really has nowhere to move in this position

4. A stuck bishop
The battery is taking the focus and even the white bishop will now have little impact on the game. Black's position is positive



03: A powerful battery Moving the queen(1) between the two rooks creates a very powerful battery of the three highest-value pieces on the board. This is a useful position.



04: Black has to defend White does not need to move forward immediately, but black does need to consider the position and staunchly defend the pawn in front of the queen.

Decoys

Try to force your opponent to occupy a poisoned square to win a game, but be prepared to sacrifice a lot to force their hand

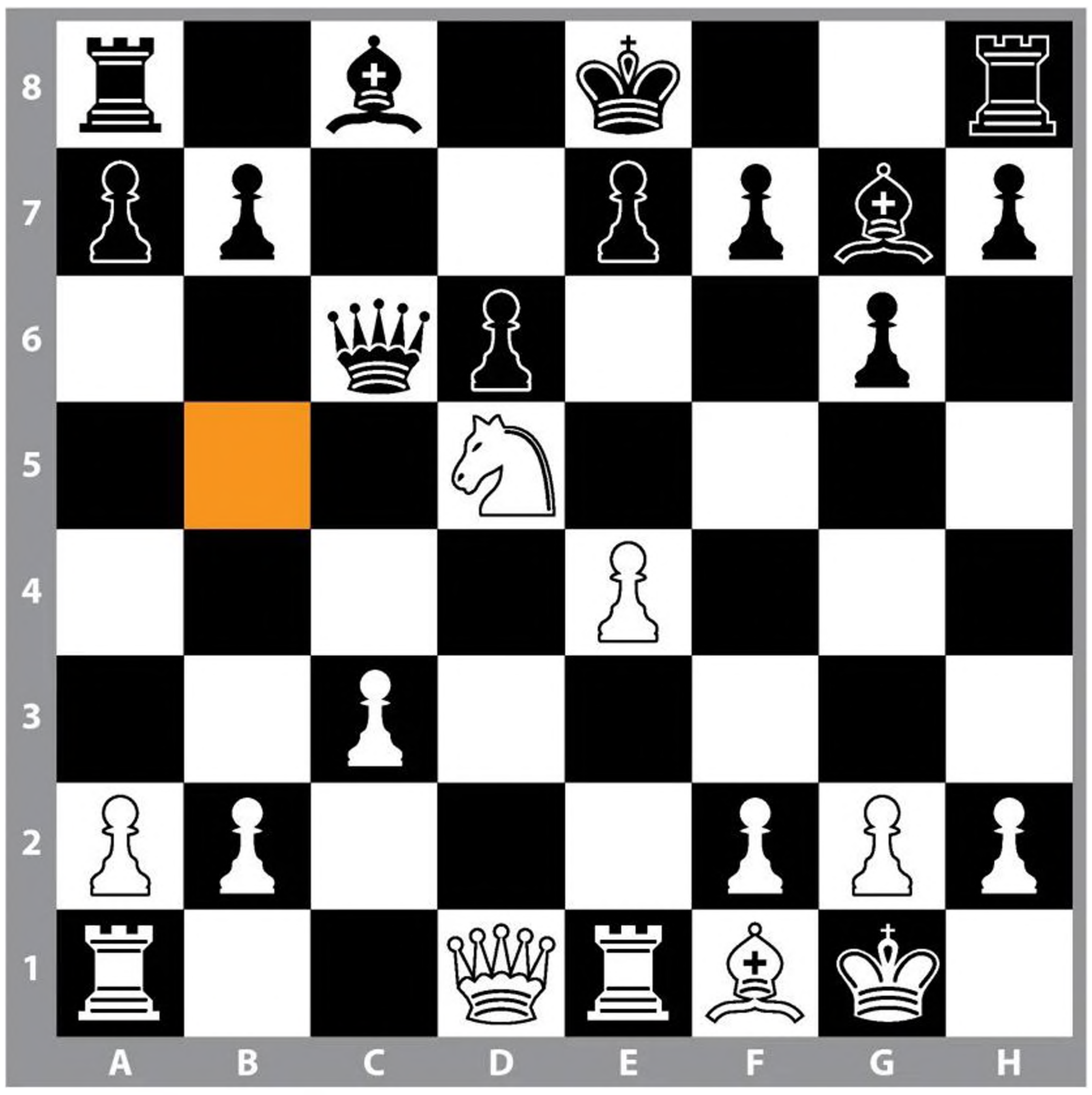
Top tip

It's a pattern

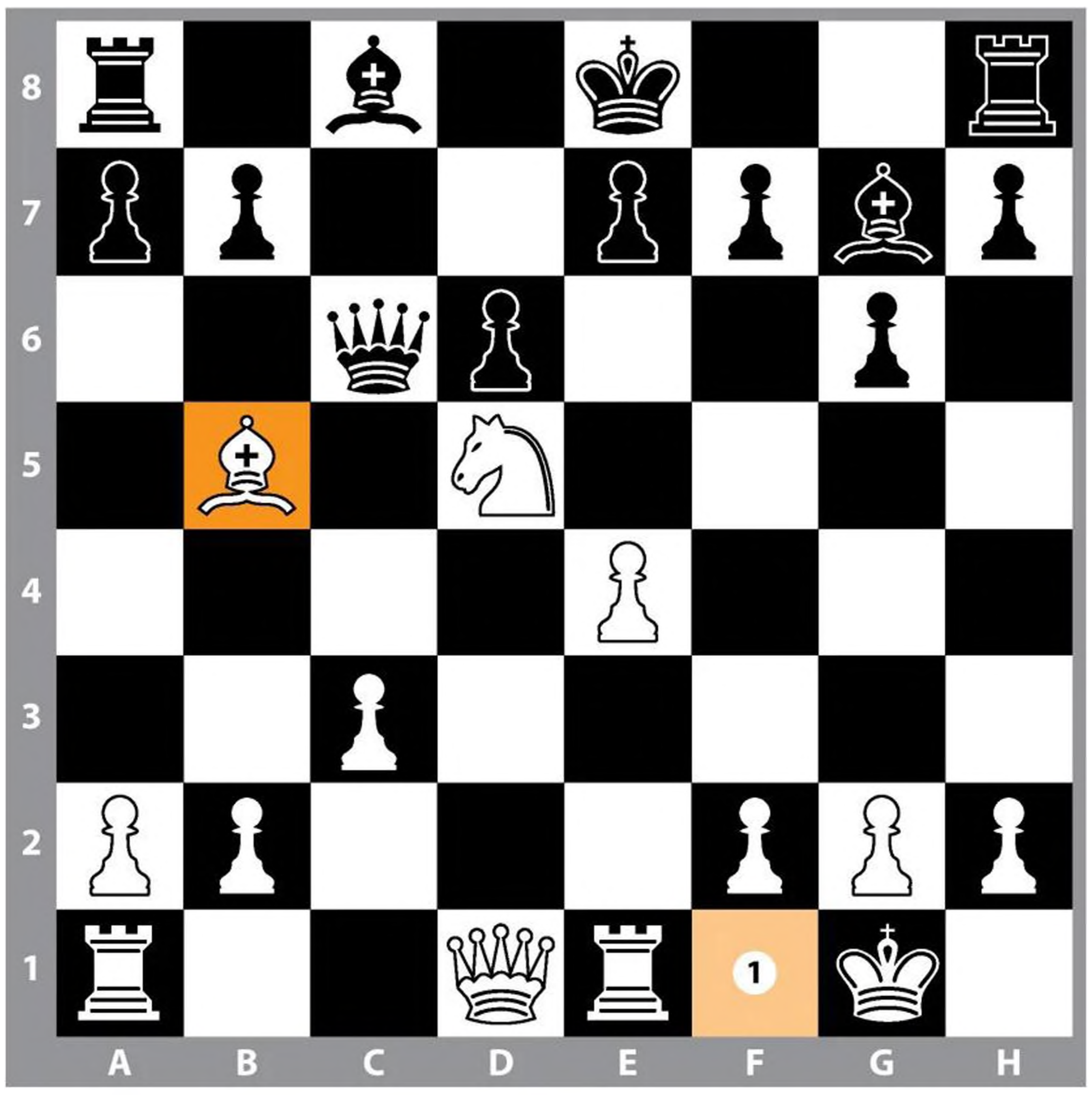
A decoy is a hidden pattern and the best way to learn it is to read as many examples of successful decoys as you can. As with patterns in all walks of life, familiarity starts to make them obvious.

A decoy is a simple strategy in many ways, but is one that is best played once you have a few tough games under your belt and when you are able to use various moves to trap your opponent. It centres around what is called 'the poisoned square' and ideally you will be looking to force your opponent to place their king or queen on that square. You can get away with some large sacrifices to force this move onto your opponent and still come out ahead, so don't be afraid to give up one or two powerful pieces to achieve your goal. The square is considered poisoned because of the location of pieces close to it and, for example, if your opponent moves into it he could be placed in a fork that would mean losing a valuable piece and then having to deal with a much less favourable position. It is in effect the moment before a decisive move occurs and if you can spot the potential and force your opponent to fall into your trap, the benefits will become clear very quickly. The beauty of a decoy is that it is very hard to spot for your opponent and this is why it is used by experienced players quite often. It is one of the moves that sets apart experience from inexperience, so initially your goal will be to try to spot the potential, no matter how many moves it is ahead, rather than trying to play decoys yourself. Decoys abound in games of chess and the majority are missed by beginners, but if you happen to spot one that you can use, don't be afraid to lose pieces and just go for it. The experience of completing your first decoy will arm you with wise knowledge which you can expand upon in the future and which you can vary many different times.

> "The beauty of a decoy is that it is very hard to spot"

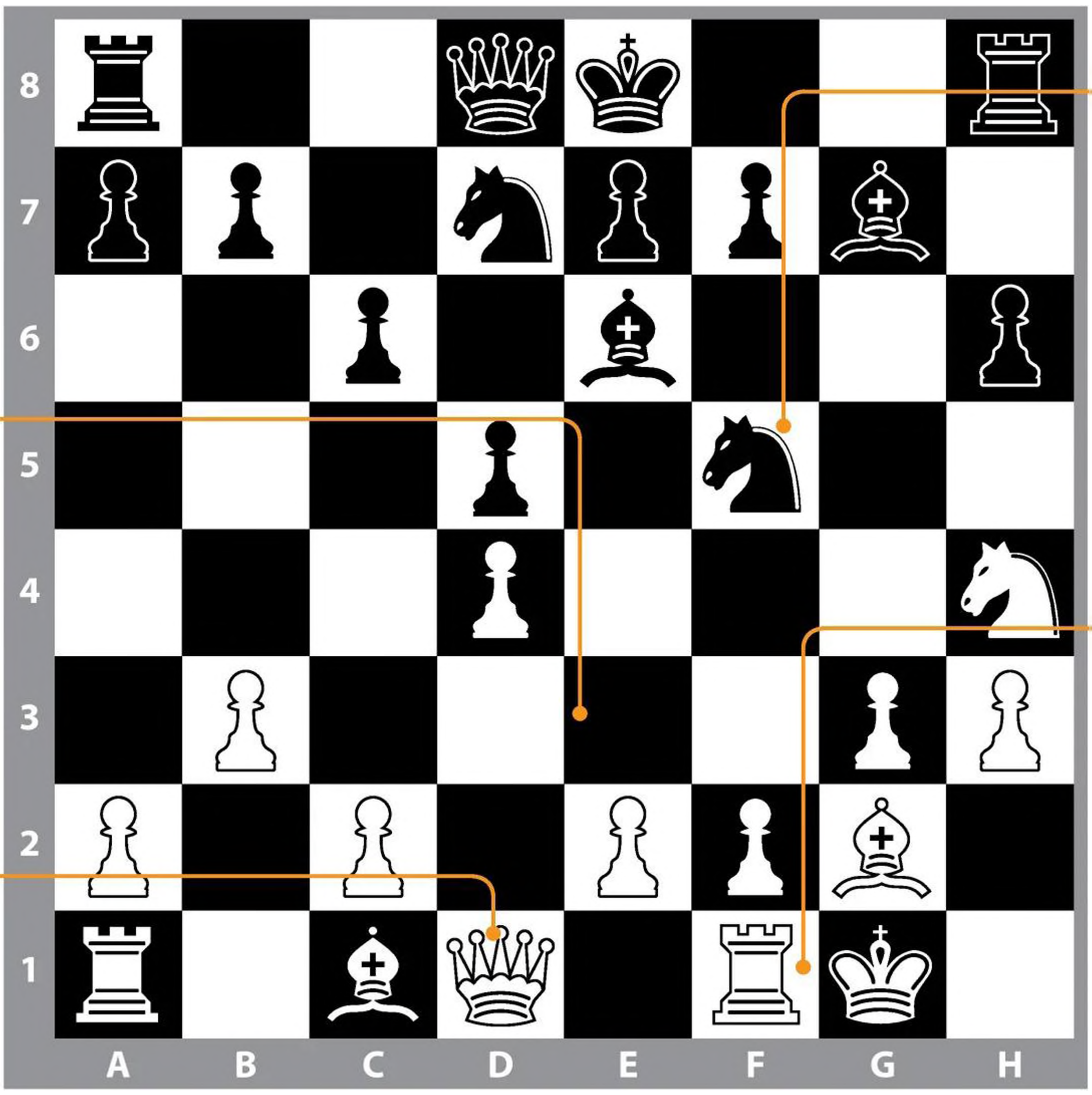


01: The poisoned square With white to move, the poisoned square is located at b5. It is not obvious to see why this is, but see if you can guess before reading the next steps.



02: Sacrifice the bishop Moving the bishop(1) means that if the queen moves, the king will be in check. The queen can be sacrificed or can now take the bishop.

Spot a poisoned square A potential decoy is happening

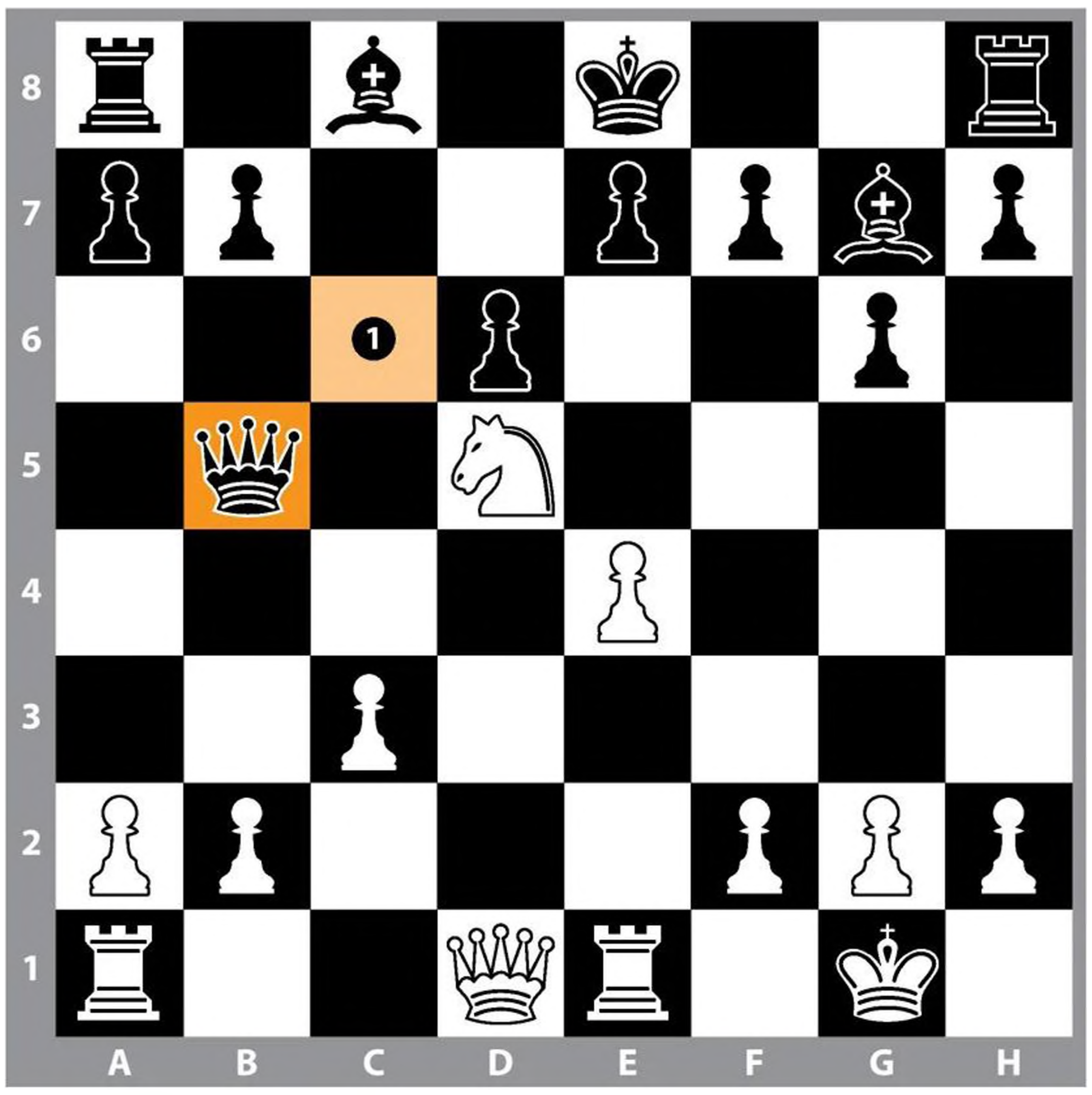


1. The key square The poisoned square in this scenario is e3 and your goal here is to occupy it yourself as black rather than forcing your opponent to

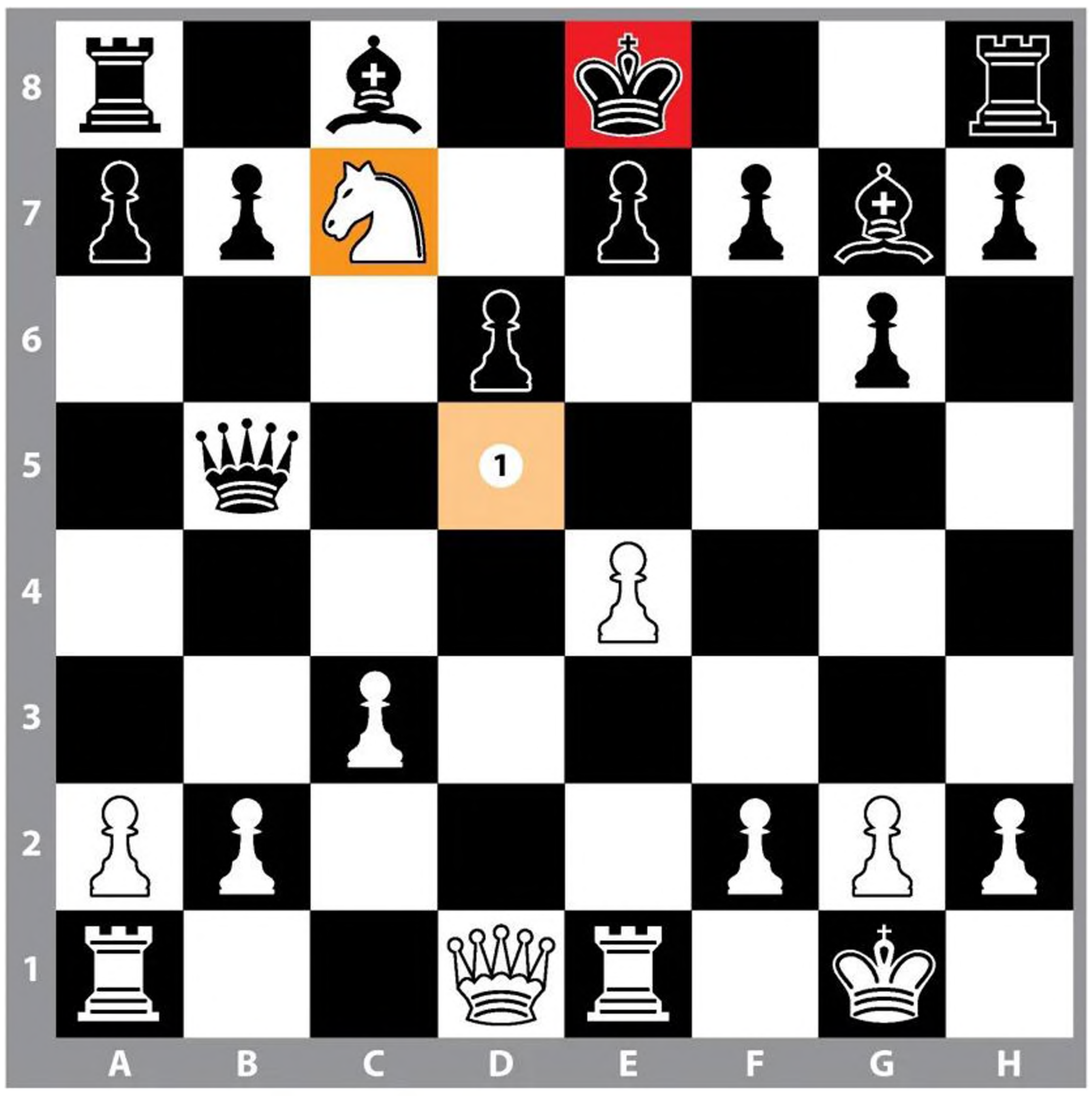
2. Use the knight A white piece does not need to move to e3 to cause danger because if the black knight can get to it, a problem for white will occur

3. Move the rook Moving the rook one square can avert the immediate danger here because it stops a potential fork from happening when e3 is taken

4. Protect the queen If the knight moves to e3, the rook and queen will be attacked so moving the rook will also help to protect the queen from a fork



03: The fatal error The logical course is for the queen(1) to take the bishop, but it is in fact a clever trap and the error has already been made which will change the game.



04: A perfect fork The knight can now move and create a fork on the king (which will have to be moved), the rook and the queen. A near perfect decoy manoeuvre.

Traps

Chess traps are effective, but do require help from an opponent who has to fall for the move. There are many different traps

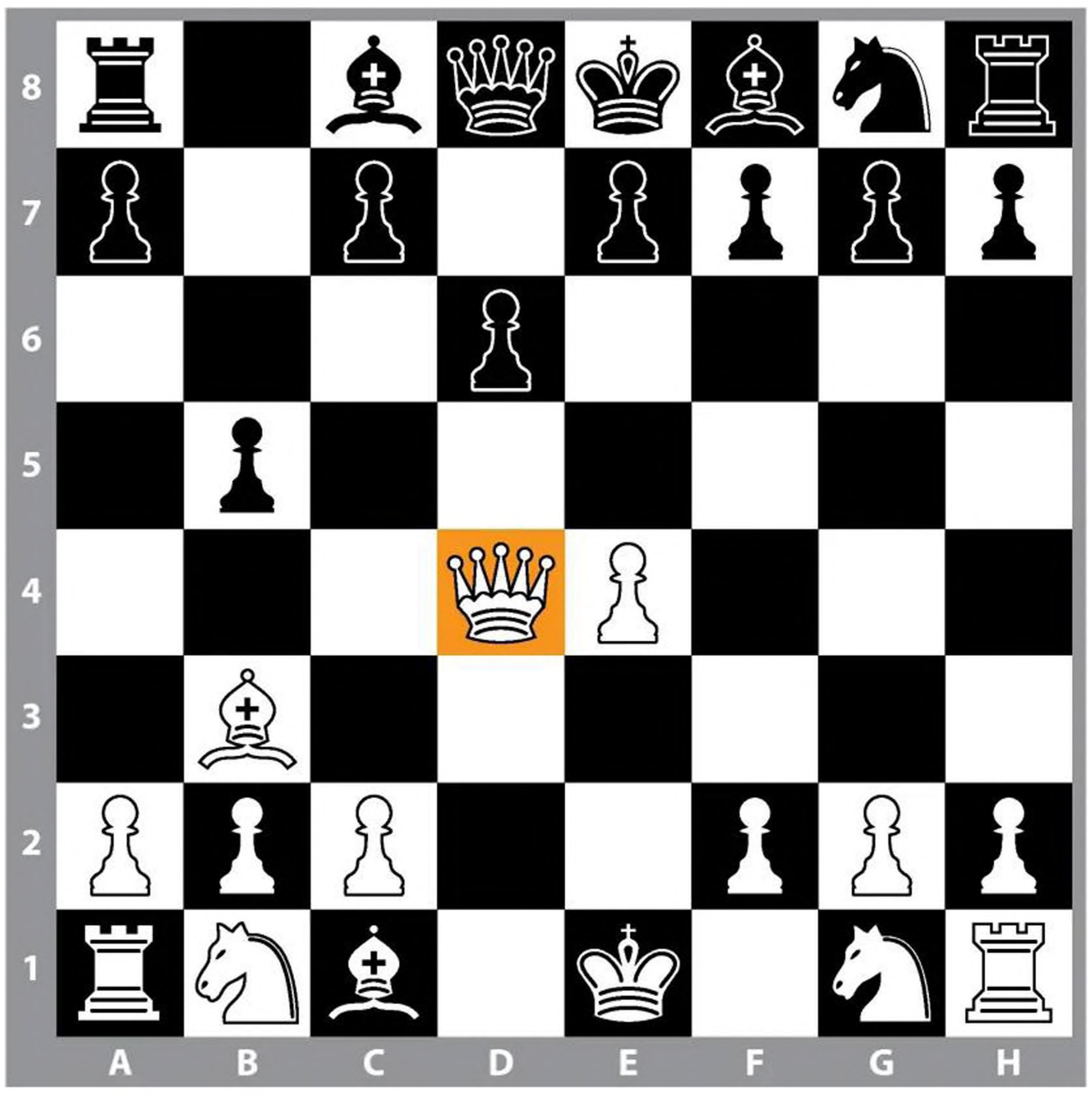
Top tip

All or nothing

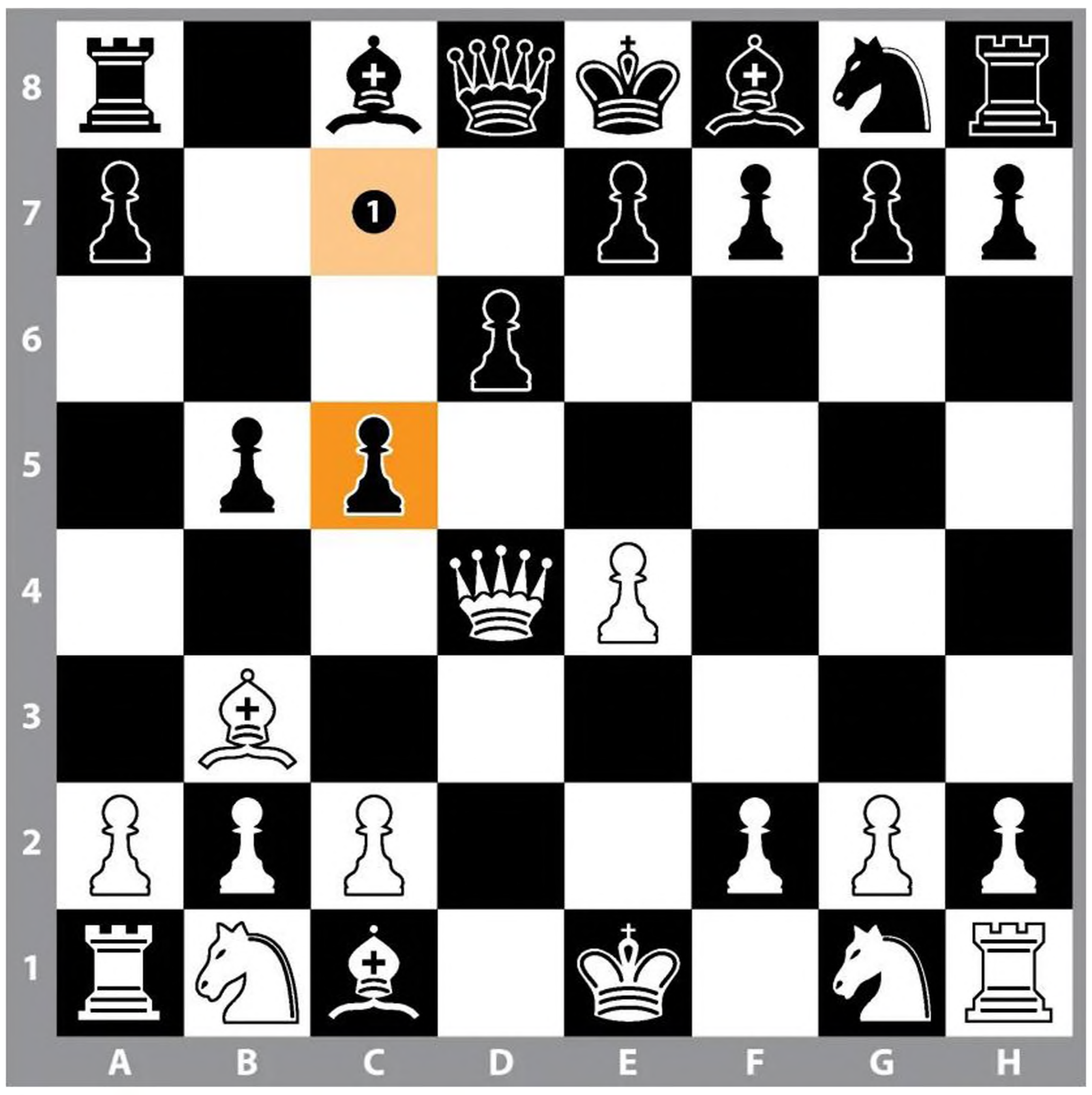
The nature of traps means that they are usually an 'all or nothing' move – if not pulled off successfully, they may well leave you in a weakened position. You will need to use traps very wisely.

Chess traps are known by a variety of names and the list of potential traps is indeed very long. You will hear of traps called Fishing Pole, Kieninger and Siberian, but some study will be needed to familiarise yourself with the most effective ones. As you gain experience, you'll also start to understand which ones will work best in the situation you are in. The idea is to lay a trap that makes your opponent play a losing move, but the downside is that if they do not fall for it, you may end up in a vastly weakened position. It is a move with many downsides and one which often takes control away from you because you are relying on your opponent to fail to a degree rather than safely forcing them into a position where they are disadvantaged. If you can force an opponent's piece into a position where they cannot move at all without the piece being taken, you will have put yourself at an advantage. This is particularly beneficial for high-value pieces such as the queen or rook and even more so when the king is trapped, but even then there are possible downsides. Your opponent should have multiple opportunities to avoid a trap by moving any one of a number of pieces earlier in the game and this is why a trap does rely on them not spotting it, as much as you laying a clever trap. Any piece can be trapped during a game and most will lead to a disadvantage of some kind because having options and a range of movement open to you is key to building strategies and ultimately winning. It may not feel like an important move in comparison to others, but it happens in almost every game from the start so is worth understanding.

"The idea is to lay a trap that makes your opponent play a losing move"

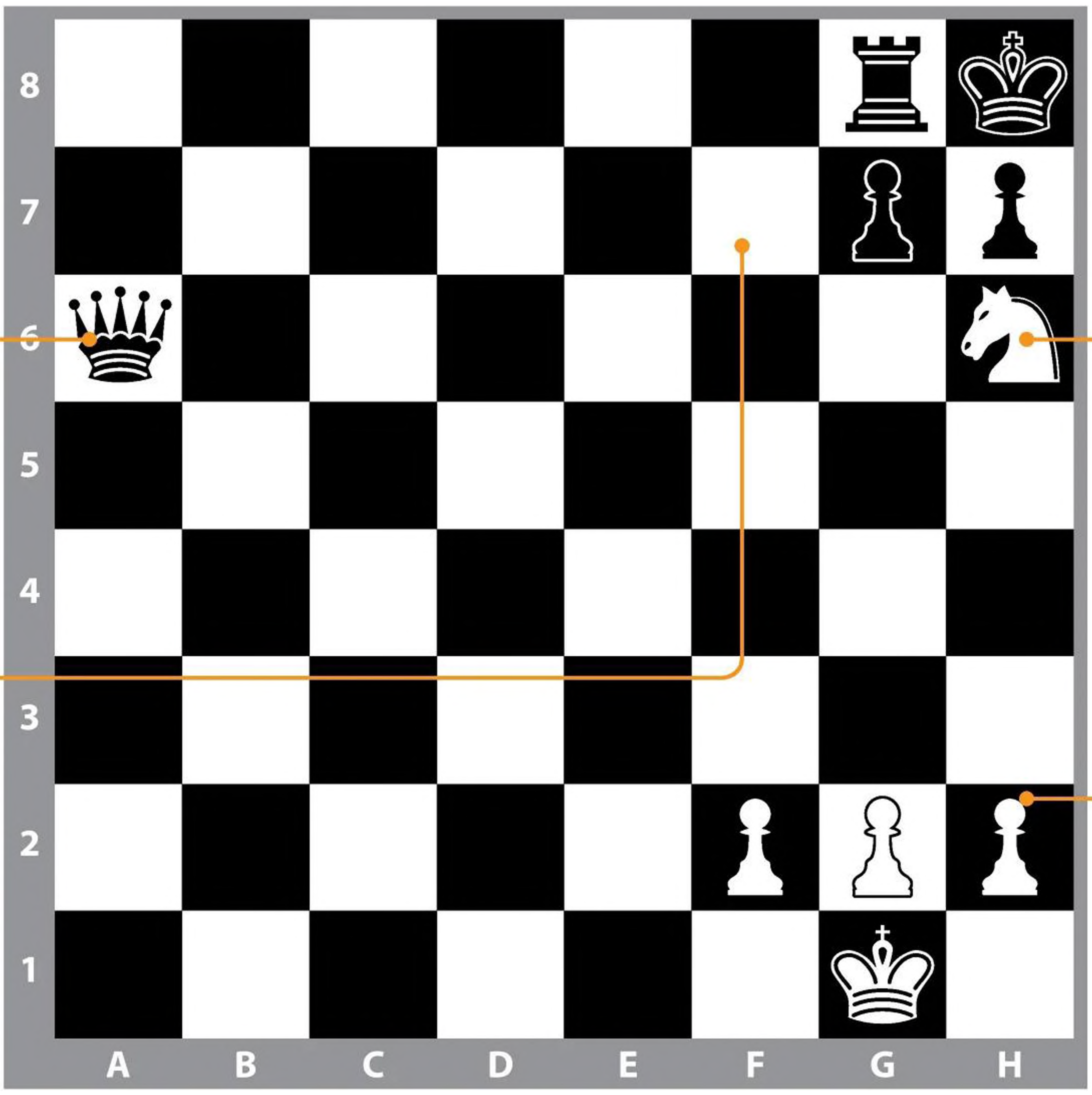


01: No obvious trap White's first consideration here may be to ensure that the queen has no obvious threat. The fact that there is one coming could easily distract them.



02: A threatening pawn When black's pawn(1) is moved forward, the queen is immediately under threat. It cannot take the pawn as it will also be taken by the other pawn at d6.

A perfect trap The king is dead

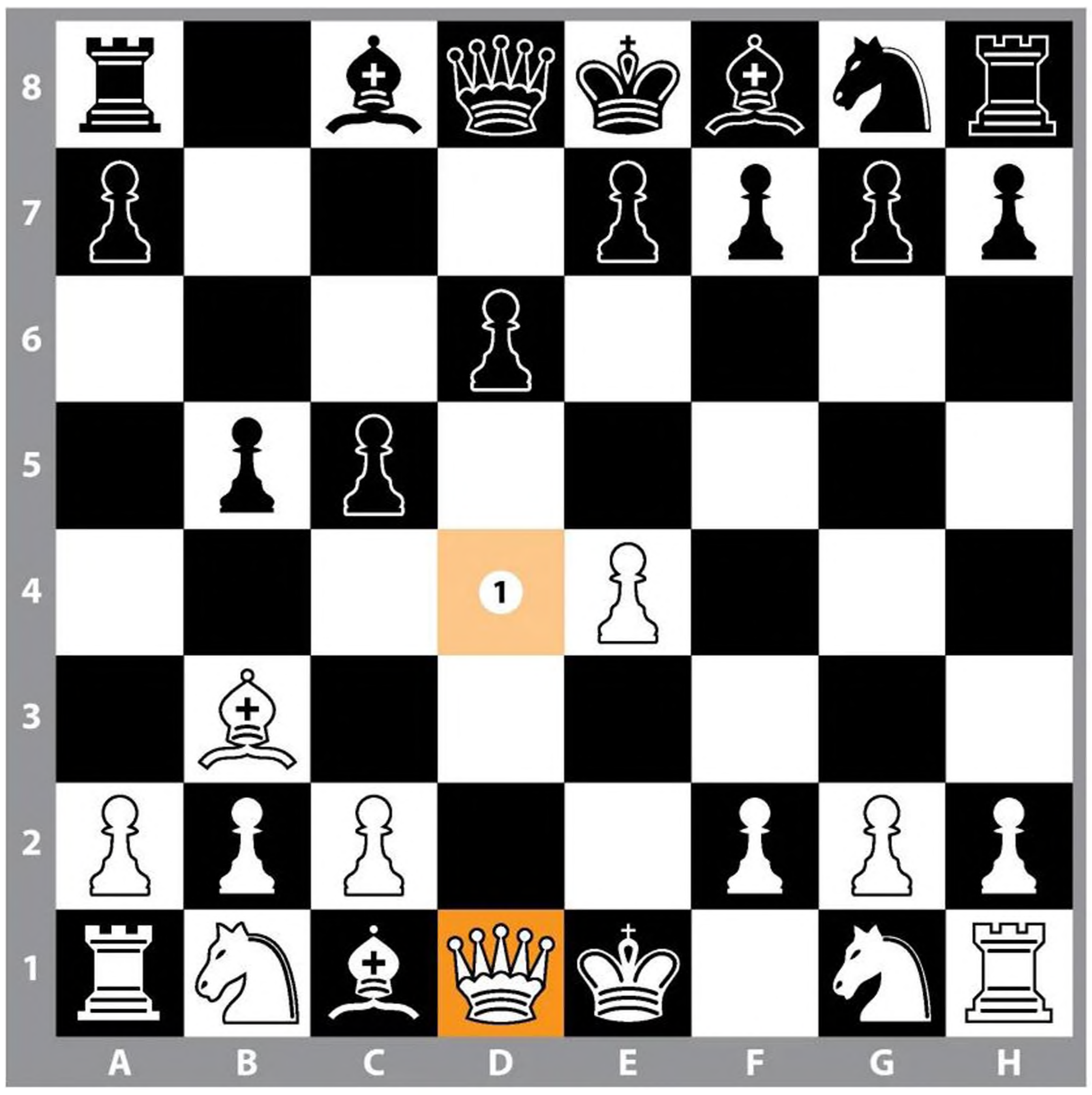


1. A weak position?
White has lower-value pieces still left on the board and in theory black's queen against white's knight should give black an advantage

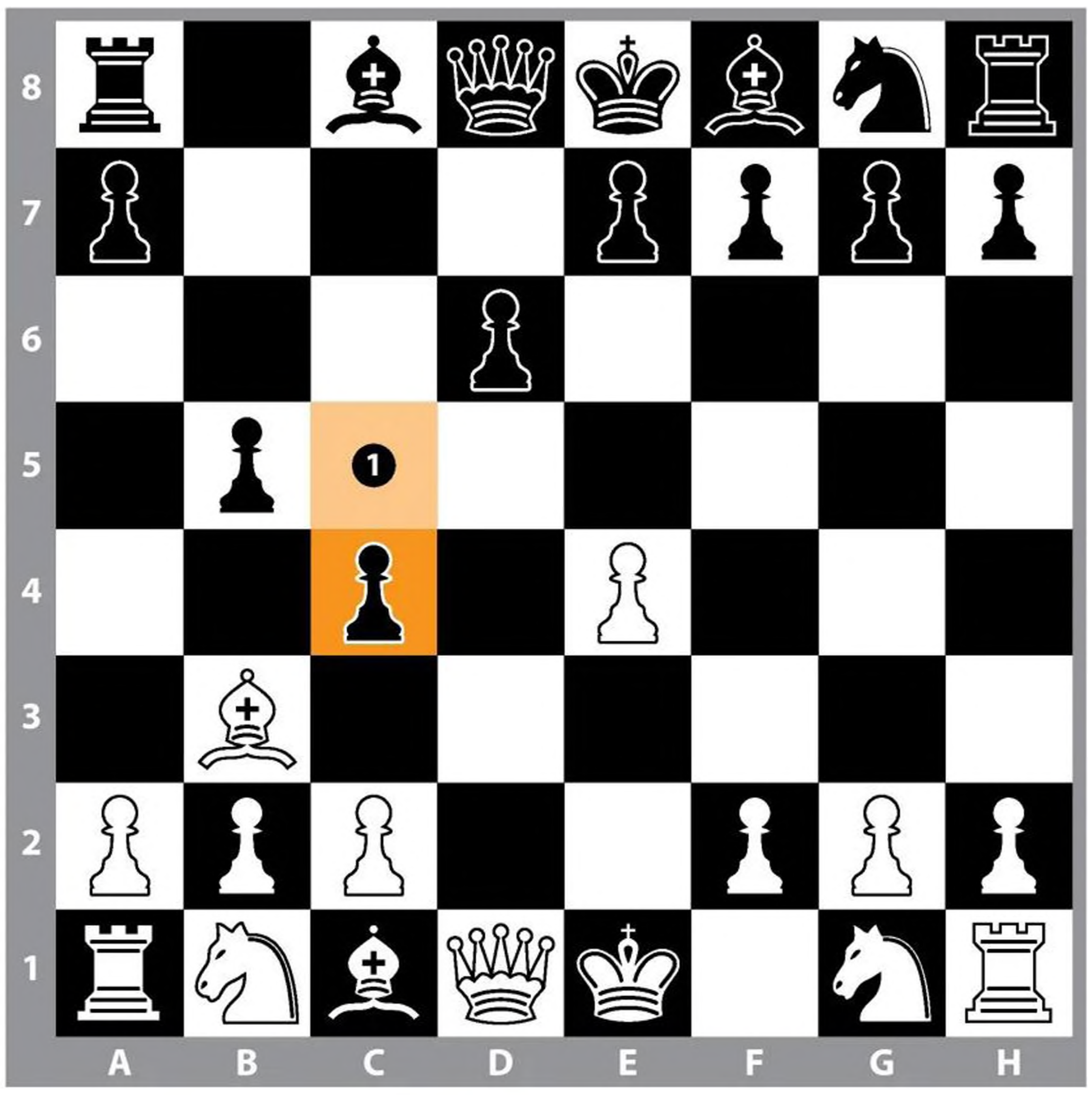
2. A key knight
The knight is under attack from the black queen, but it is white's move and this will make all of the difference to the endgame

3. A useless queen
The queen, which is of course a powerful piece, is helpless to attack in this situation because the trap is ready to be completed

4. The trap square
If white's knight moves to f7, black's king is trapped and has nowhere to move to. The game is now effectively over



03: Time to retreat The logical move is for the queen(1) to retreat to protect itself, but this is exactly what black is hoping for. The trap can now be set with one move.



04: A trapped bishop As you can see, the bishop is now trapped and cannot move to any position without being taken. The trapping pawn(1) is also protected. A tricky position.

Pawn promotion

Pawn promotion looks obvious, but there is a lot to think about when your pawn survives a tortuous trip to the eighth rank

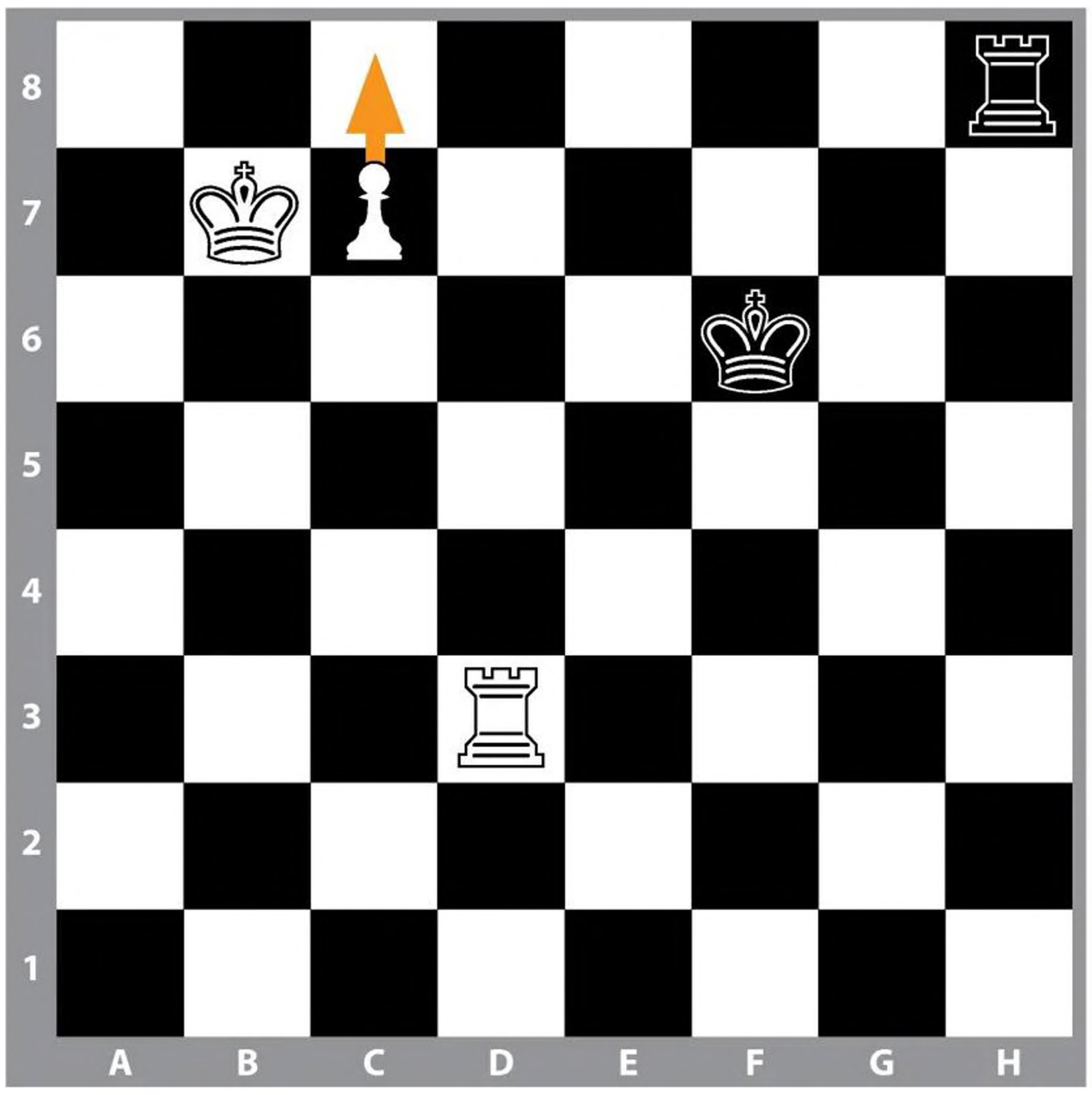
Top tip

Defending pawn promotions

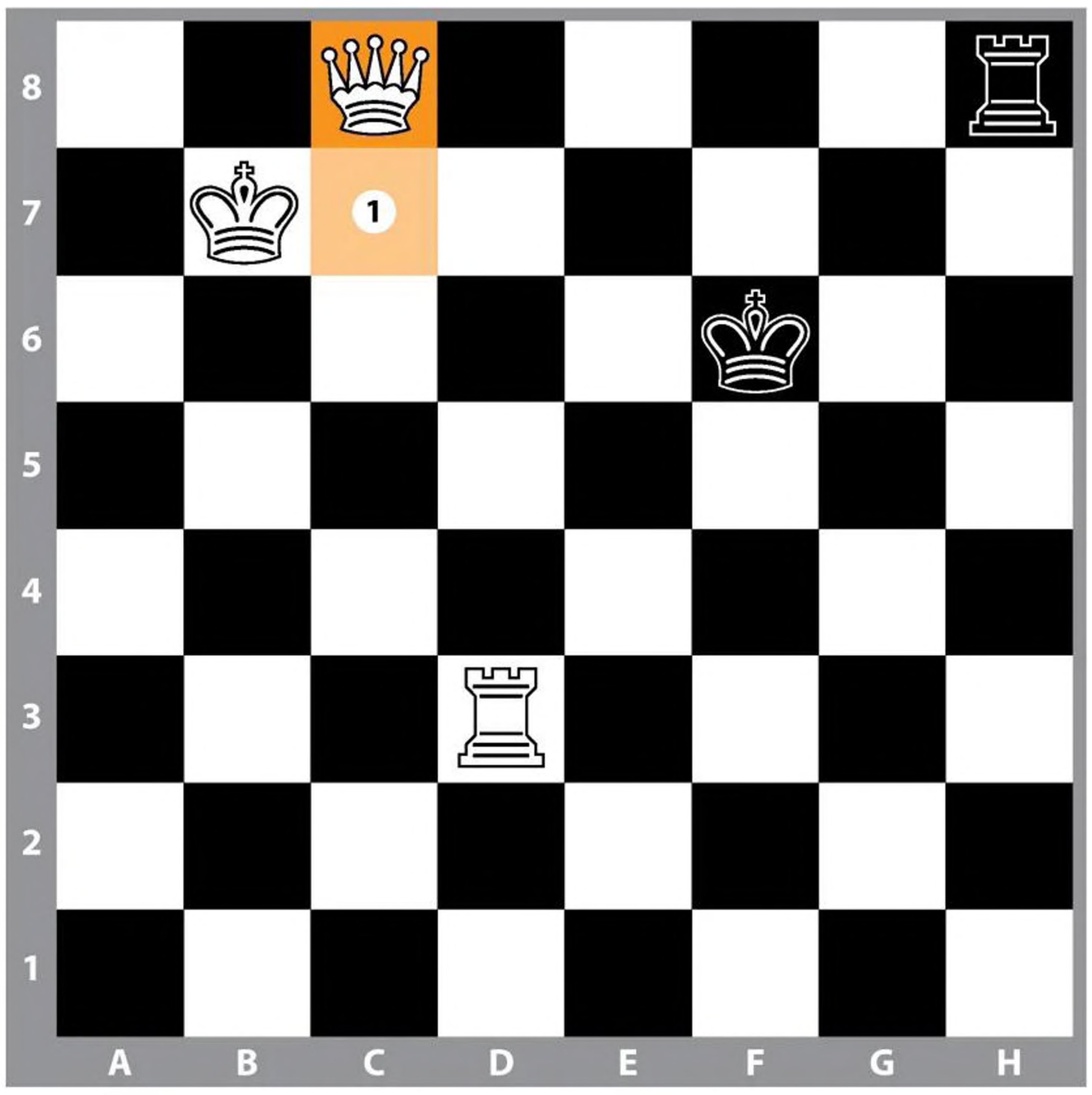
During the middle and endgame, always be aware of the potential for a pawn to be promoted and consider blocking its path if you have an obvious opportunity to do so.

Pawn promotion is magical in its own way and can make all the difference to the ending of a game. It will happen deep into a game because the pawn has to reach the eighth rank to be exchanged for another piece, which will mean that many moves have already been made by your opponent to free up the rank and allow for the pawn progression. The pawn can be swapped for any piece and it does not matter if it is technically not available because it can still be used. In real games the required piece will need to be found and, for example, an upside-down rook can also be used to designate a queen. As it happens, the queen is often chosen to replace the pawn because of its range of movement, and so is a rook. It is not, however, unheard of for a knight to be chosen if a specific position warrants its unique style of movement and so you should not presume to always opt for a queen when a promotion is available. If you do choose a piece other than the queen, it is called 'under-promotion' and swapping for a queen is often called 'queening'. You should always consider carefully when to move your pawn to the eighth rank and ideally think of it as a queen when it gets close to the end of the board. There is no point in promoting your pawn and having it taken or trapped immediately, and thinking of it as a queen is more likely to focus your mind on its potential value. It is also important to practise with a promoted piece because having two queens, or indeed a duplicate of any other piece, will feel unusual if you have played with a standard set for a long time. It changes your entire chess-playing mindset instantly.

> "Consider carefully when to move your pawn to the eighth rank"

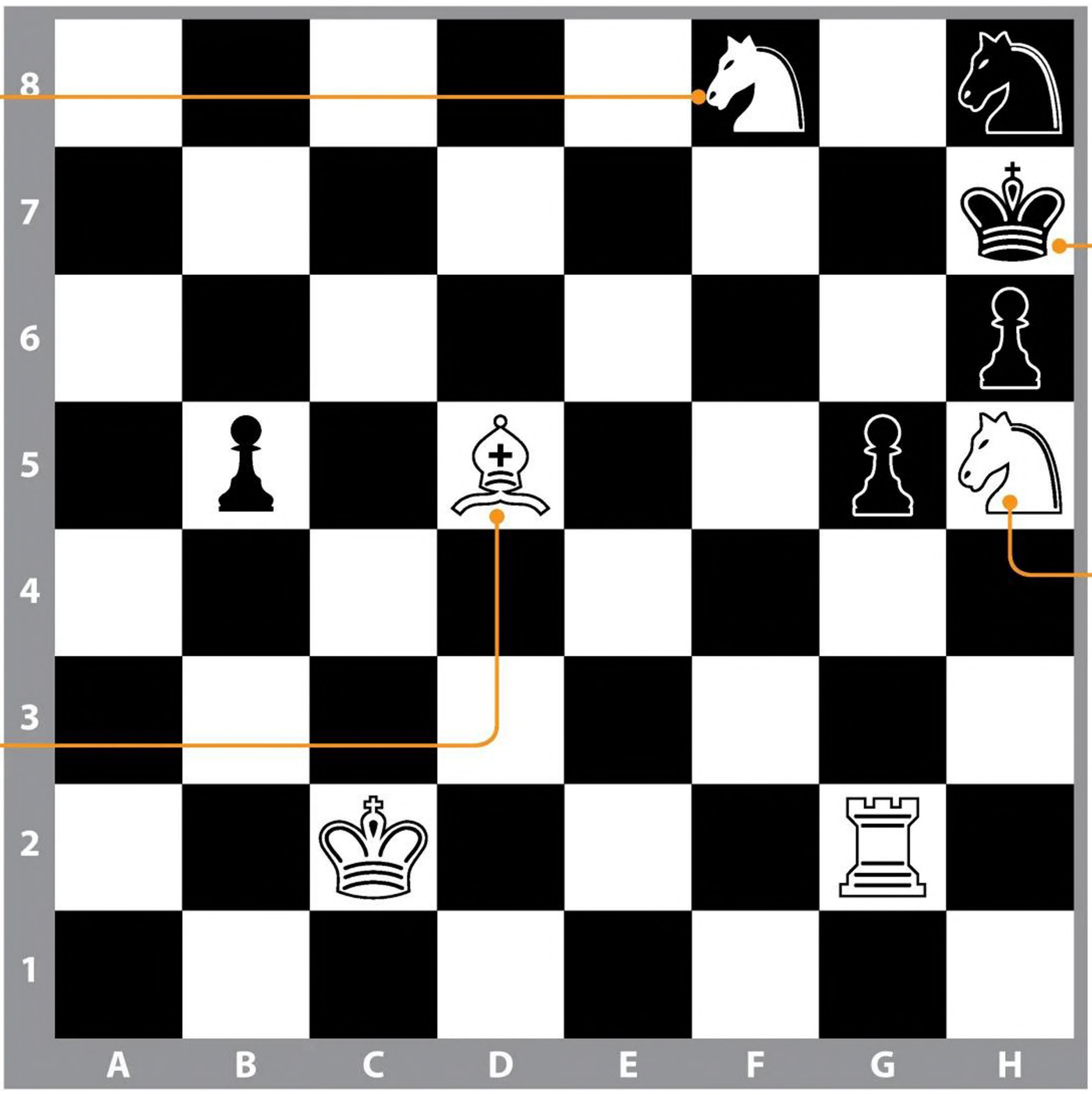


01: Time to move The white pawn can be promoted in this situation, but the obvious danger is the black rook which can immediately move and capture it. No need to panic.



02: It's now promoted The pawn(1) has been promoted to a queen, but black moves next. The temptation to immediately take the white queen may be too obvious to avoid.

A serious underpromotion An unusual knight swap

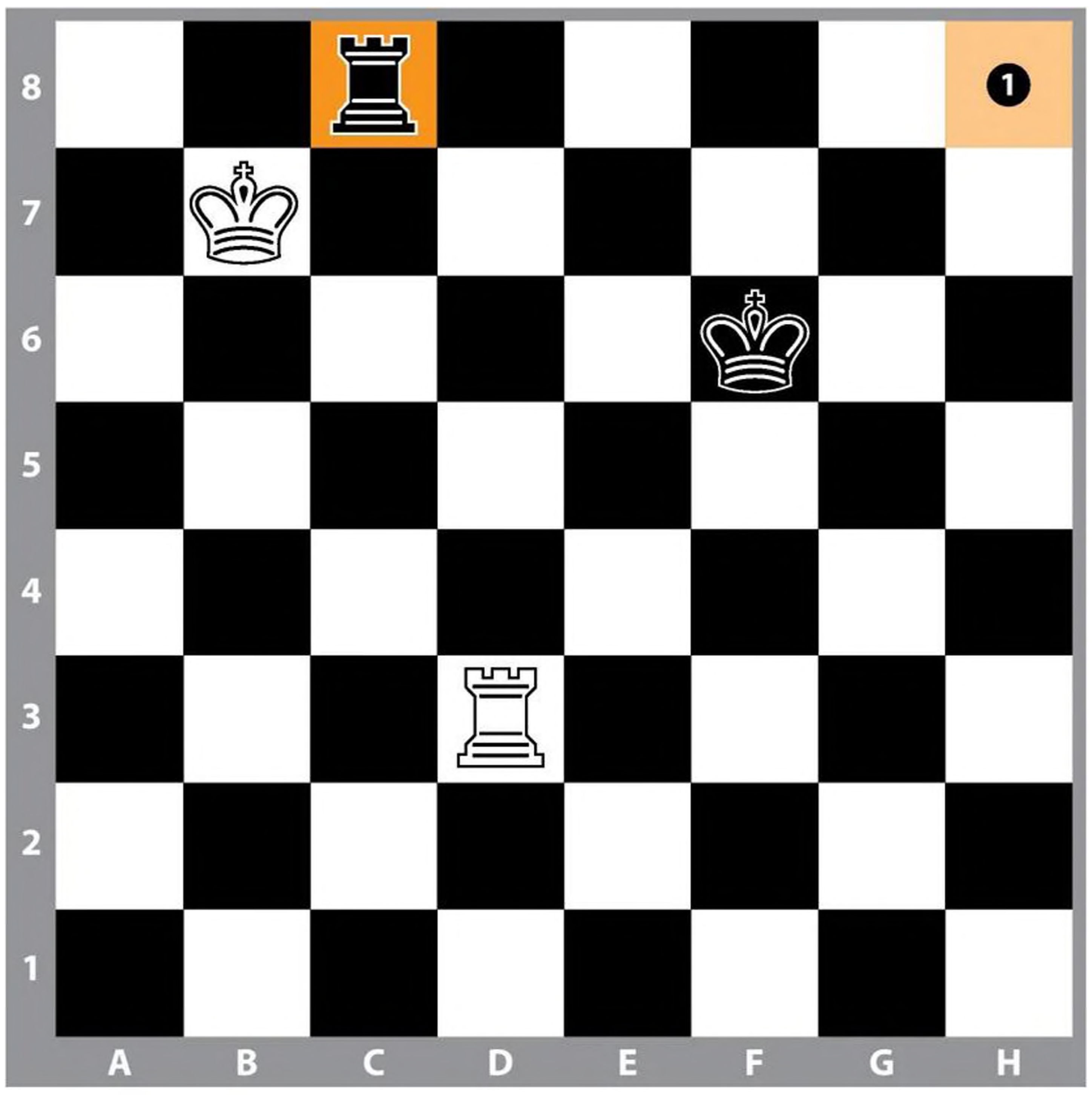


1. A quick promotion
In this situation, white has taken the unusual move of promoting the pawn to a knight. The reason for this move will become clear

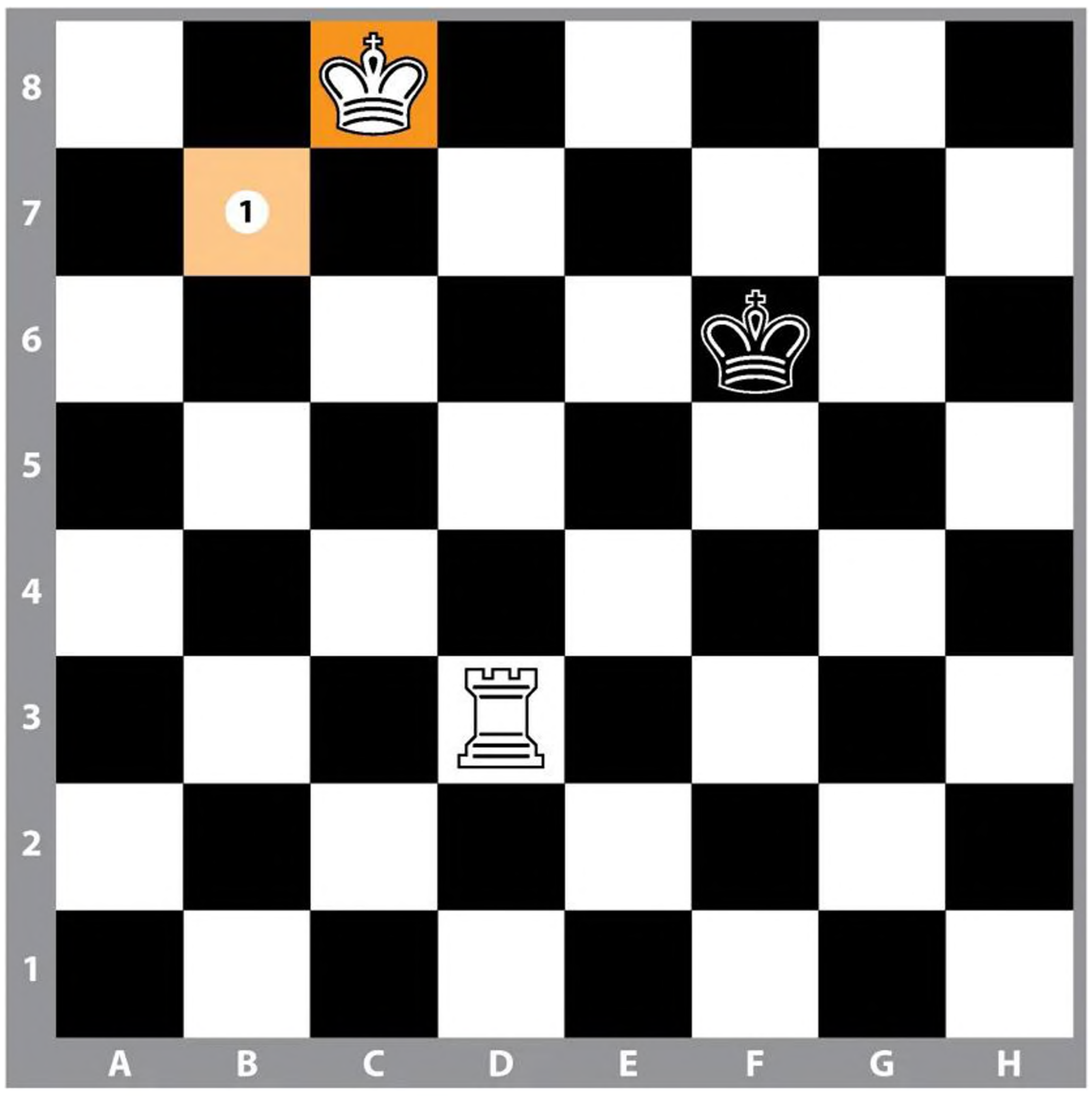
A holding bishop
The white bishop is already blocking the black king from moving to a square where it could attack the knight and remain safe

2. Check!
The newly promoted knight is now putting the king in check, which was the intention, but the situation is much worse that it looks

Checkmate!
This knight is blocking another potential escape and so we are left with a win for white. The promotion to a knight worked perfectly



03: An obvious move The rook has now taken the queen, but the king can now immediately swoop in and take it. The promotion to a powerful queen worked in this situation.



04: Game over? The end result is a board where white now has a rook to play with and black only has the king. The promotion helped develop this powerful position.

Zugzwang

If you can force a zugzwang on your opponent, particularly near the end of a game, you will end up in an advantageous position

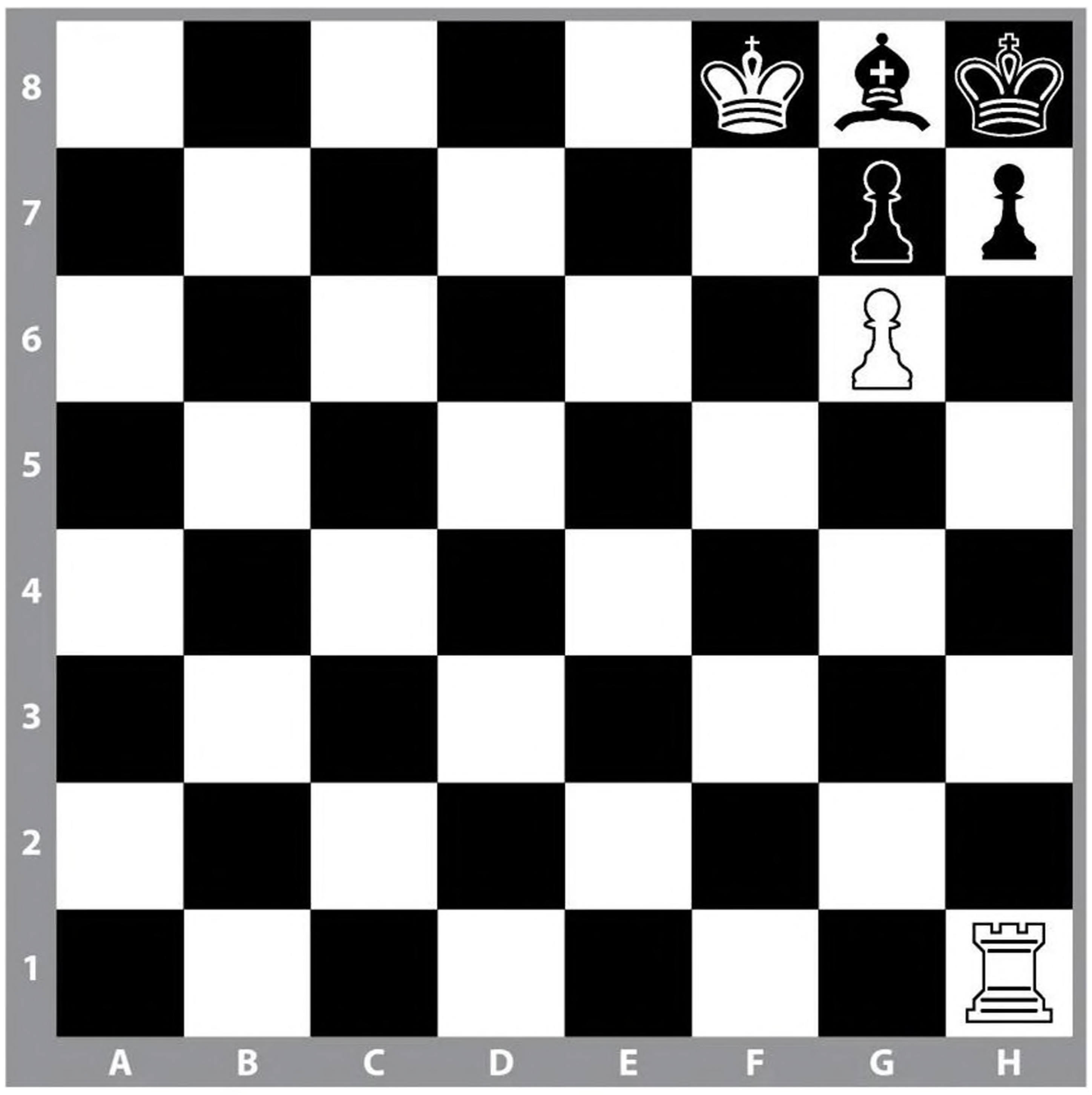
Top tip

Don't force it

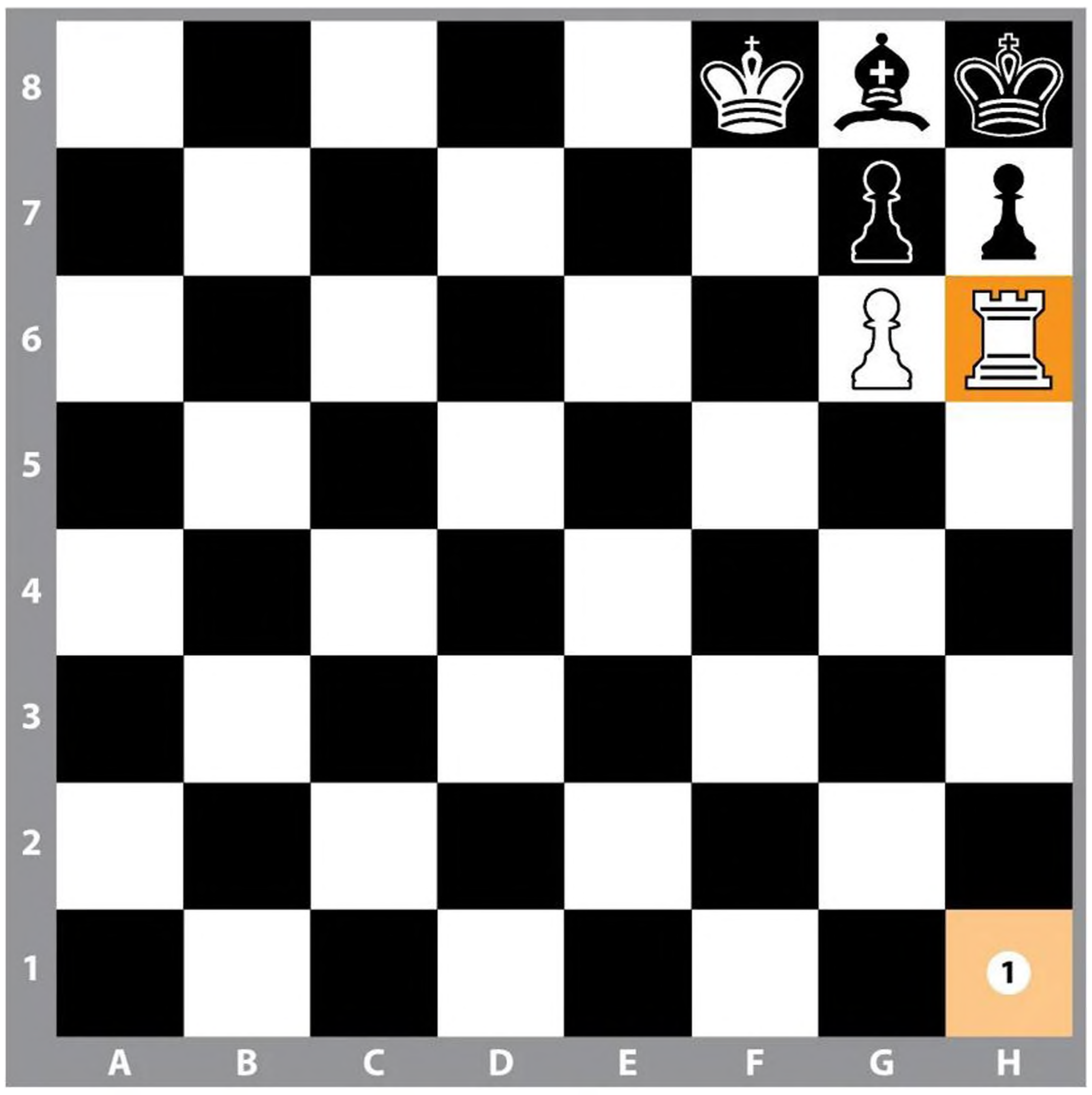
Try not to force a zugzwang early on since there will be many opportunities for your opponent to avoid it occurring. Take advantage of a situation when it happens and time it right.

Zugzwang is a position you may find yourself in where the obligation to move a piece, rather than passing, puts you at a disadvantage. The literal meaning of this German word is 'obligation to move' and that really does sum it up. Usually, it will mean your opponent having to move a piece that is defending a higher-value piece, often the crucial king, and at the end of a game where few pieces remain, it could bring about a win very quickly. You can build up to a zugzwang, but often in games the opportunity will just arise and you can then quickly fashion a situation where your opponent is obliged to make a move they don't want to. The term does not necessarily refer to simply having a piece attacked by your opponent because this can happen multiple times throughout a game, but is more confined to a strategic position where to move would be detrimental. When there are only a few pieces left on the board – for example, a king verses a king and rook – whoever has the next move can make all of the difference to the outcome of the game and a zugzwang is often used to force a draw or a win in this situation. It is a skill worth learning early on when you start to play chess because it is commonly used to close out games and not understanding it could cause a game to continue for an unnecessarily long time, or even create a losing situation where you should have won. Zugzwang brings together many aspects of basic chess theory and as such will also help you to understand other moves and how everything comes together to build a winning strategy. It's a good place to start learning.

> "Where the obligation to move a piece puts you at a disadvantage"



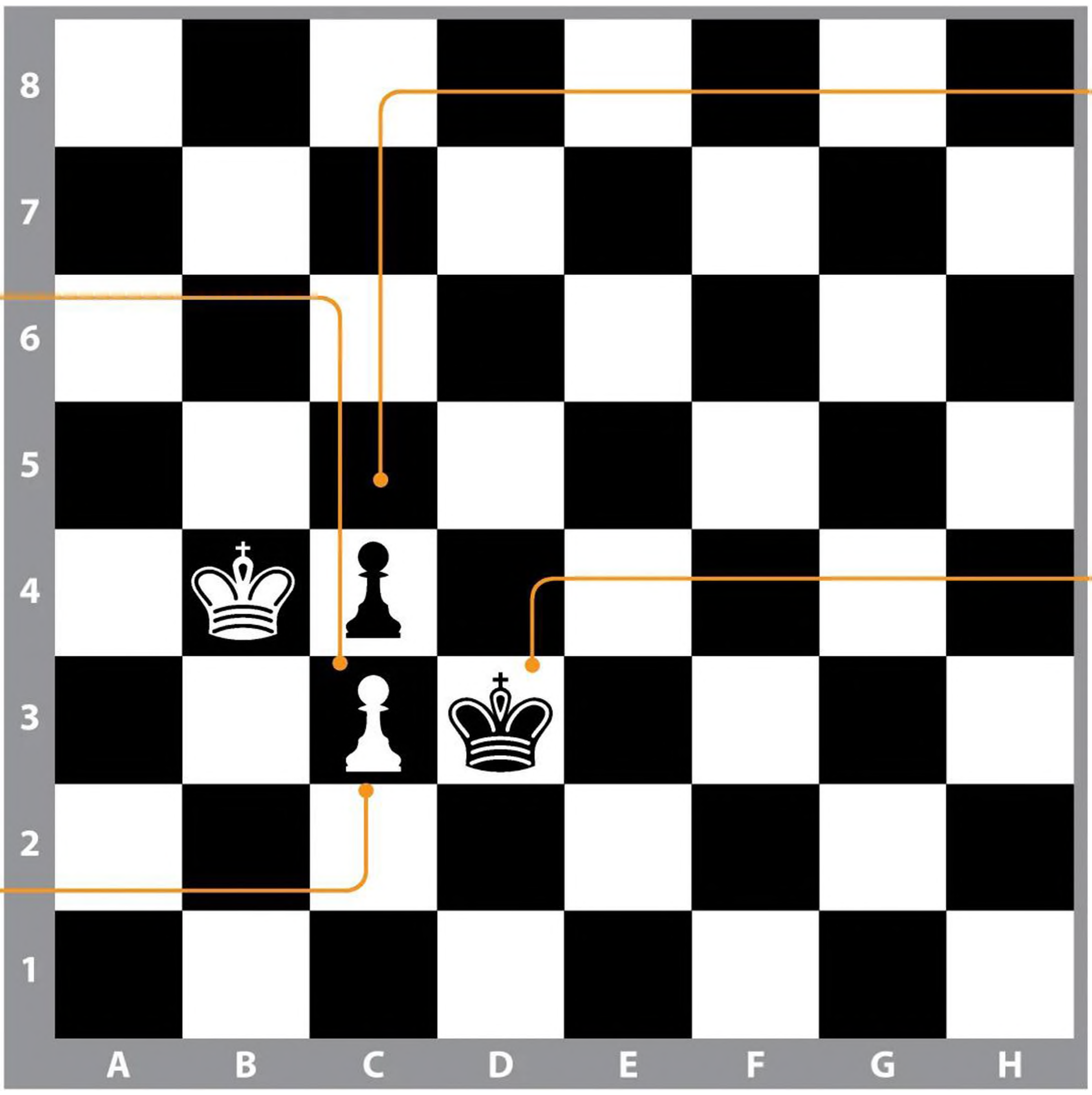
01: Black is cornered Black is rooted to the corner, but the pawns are protecting the king effectively. Without a knight, white can force a zugzwang to win the game.



02: Sacrifice the rook White can now move the rook(1) and sacrifice it, which may look initially as though the advantage is lost, but in this case it is a decisive winning move.

A classic trebuchet

Whoever moves loses

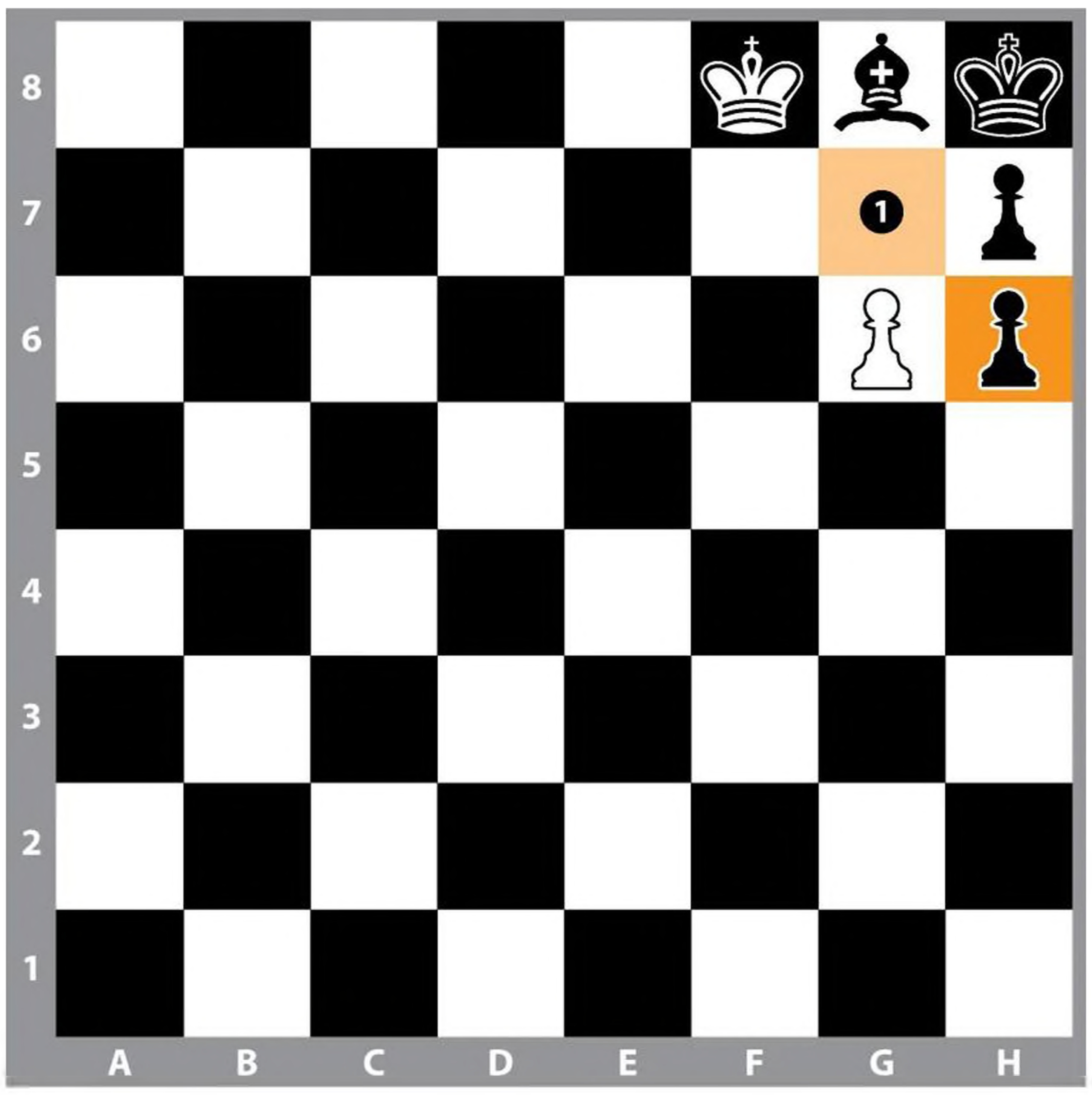


4. A common trebuchet
When a situation arises like this, where whoever has the next move will lose the game, it is described as a trebuchet

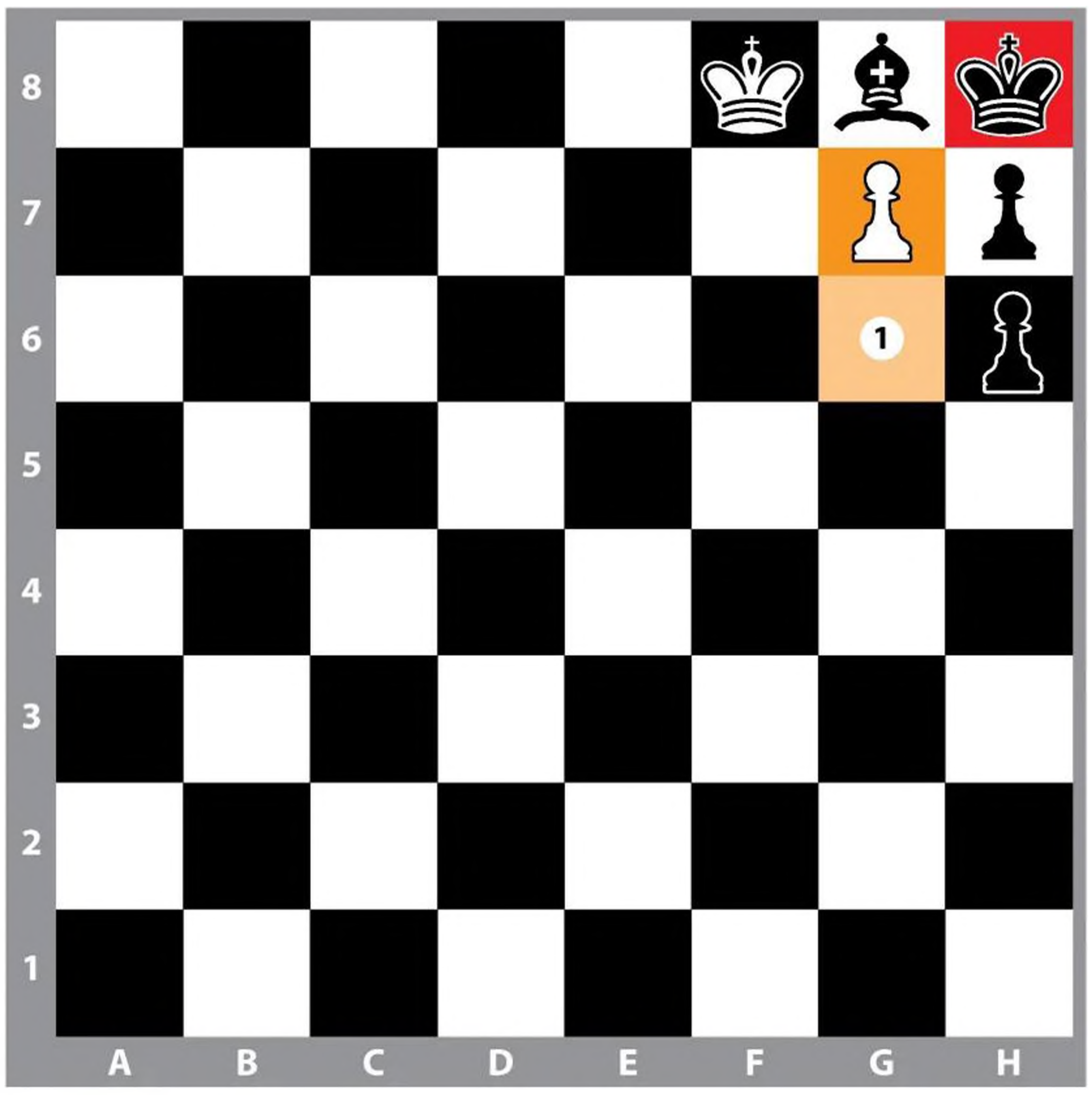
Under attack
It is white's move and there is no choice but to move the king immediately because the pawn is blocked from making any move

2. The last pawn
Black's king can now take white's pawn, which means that the game is effectively over. The extra pawn will make the difference here

3. Reversing the situation
If the situation were reversed, black would have to move the king and white could take the black pawn. A classic zugzwang situation



03: The zugzwang Black(1) is forced to take the rook straight away, otherwise the rook will take the pawn in front of the king and black will lose the game quickly anyway.



04: The final move White can now win the game by moving the pawn(1) forward. Black has nowhere to go because the white king is protecting the pawn. The game is now over.

Draws

As in all games, a draw is something to be avoided if at all possible. However, a draw from a losing position is an achievement

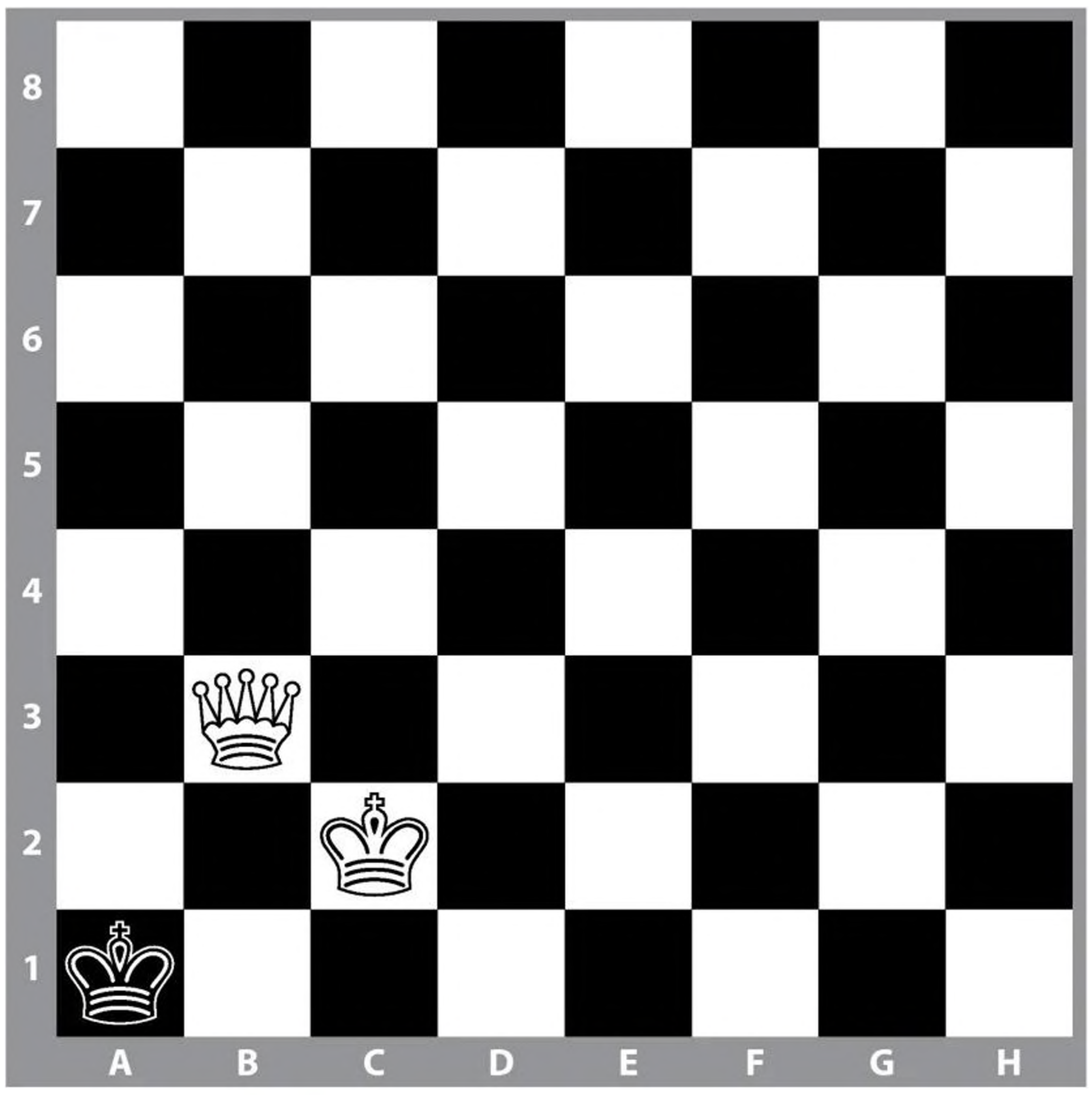
Top tip

Different rules

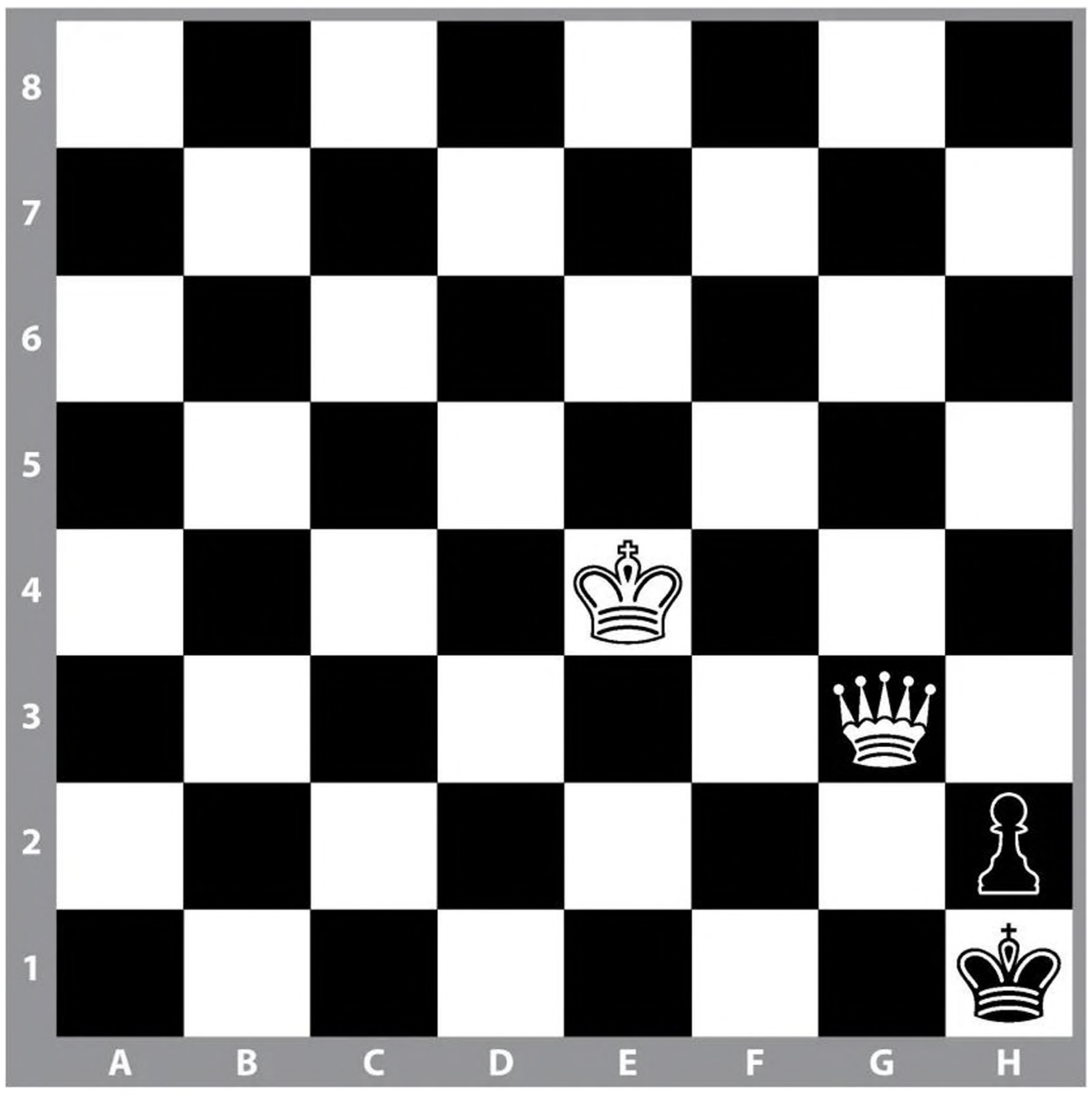
The official rules for drawn games differ depending on the level you are playing at, so it is always wise to understand what exactly constitutes a draw if you reach the level of playing in competitions.

You may think that a draw in chess is easy to learn, but there is in fact a lot to take in and the permutations that can bring about such a position are vast. The conclusion at the end of a drawn game will also differ depending on what position you were in just before a draw is declared or forced. It could be that you should have won the game and fell into an obvious trap; on the flip side, you may have been down significantly and managed to fool your opponent into making the exact wrong move at the wrong time. For example, if a player is not in check, but their opponent has colluded to bring about a situation where they cannot make a legal move, the game will be a draw and a potential winning situation lost in the blink of an eye. This is the most common way for draws to occur, but there are many other reasons and we will explain them all to you so that you will know how to force one or how to avoid creating a drawing situation from a winning position. A draw can come about by consent between both players if they realise that the game is unlikely to end in a win for either one of them or even when moves are repeated three times in a row. There is a lot to look out for when considering the likelihood of a draw within a game and all of these possibilities have to be considered on top of basic strategy and the ongoing threats from your opponent. While it is true that draws will almost certainly come about near the end of a game, you should always be aware of the potential for one to be forced upon you by an opponent who is looking weakened in the middlegame or even earlier. Here, if you can, try to avoid drawing.

> "It could be that you should have won the game and fell into a trap"

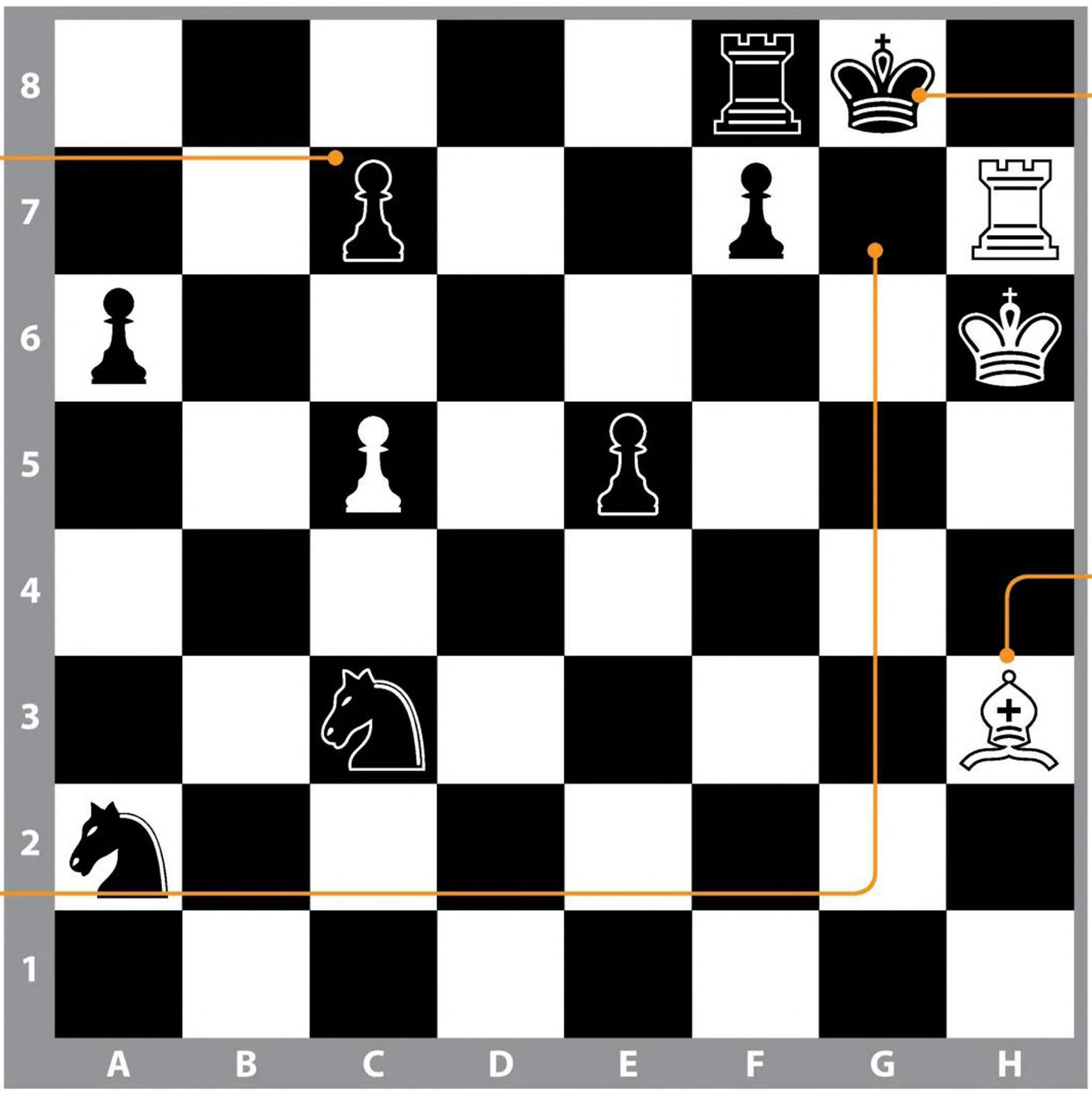


01: An obvious stalemate The black king is trapped by the white queen and king, but not in check. Black cannot move without being in check, so it is a stalemate.



02: A dangerous queen The white queen is the problem because it can cover much ground in one move. Here it has caused a stalemate by not checking the king.

Threefold repetition Perpetual check works

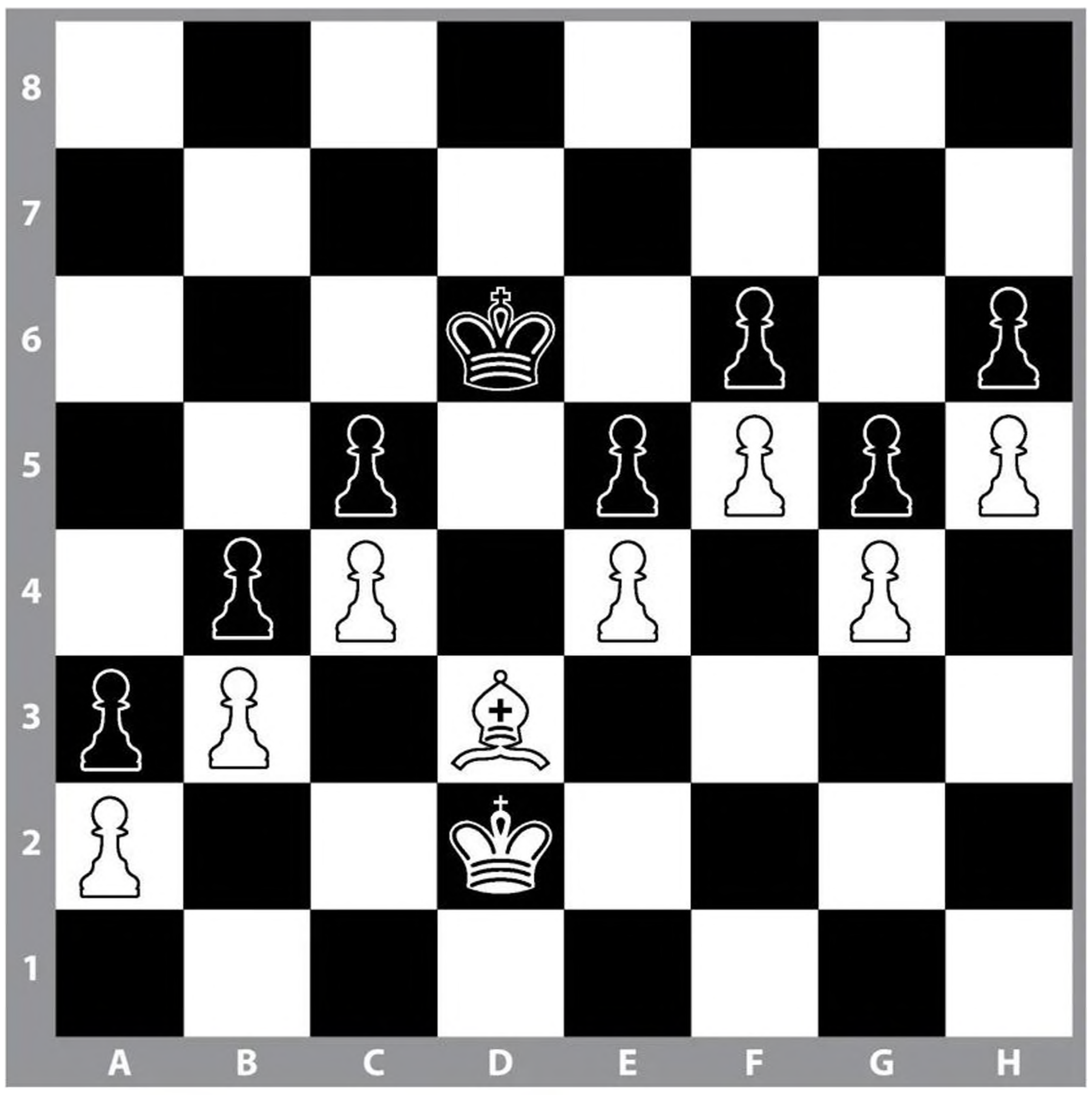


1. Check the king
If the white rook moves here, the black king will immediately be placed in check and is also blocked from moving freely

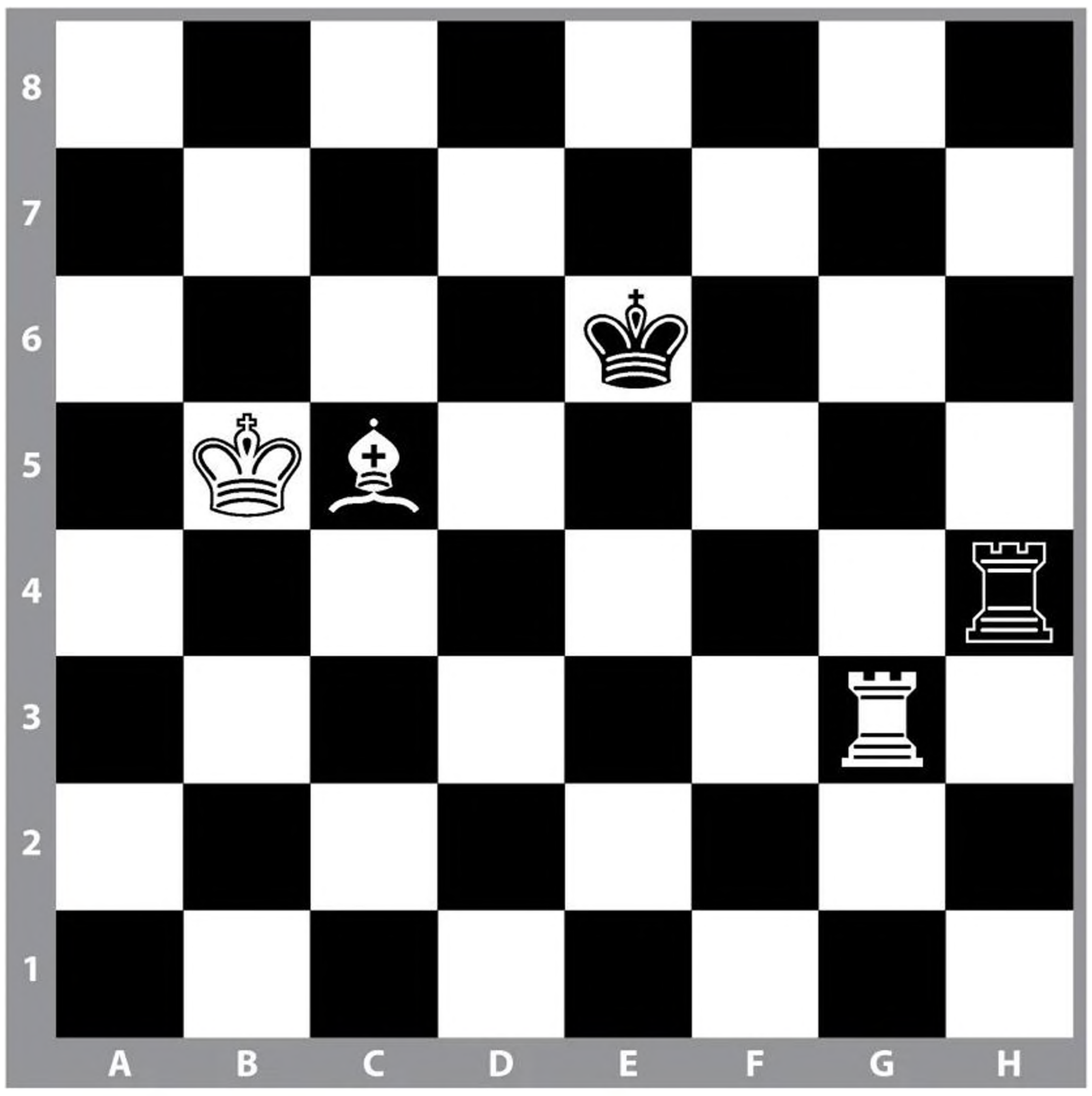
2. It can move
The black king can only move to the corner square to escape check, which puts white in a position to force a threefold repetition

3. Vary the move
White can actually move another piece such as the bishop during the threefold move process and the repetition will remain in place

4. Helpless pawns
The pawns are helpless to affect the situation because white can continually place black in check to force a draw with fewer pieces



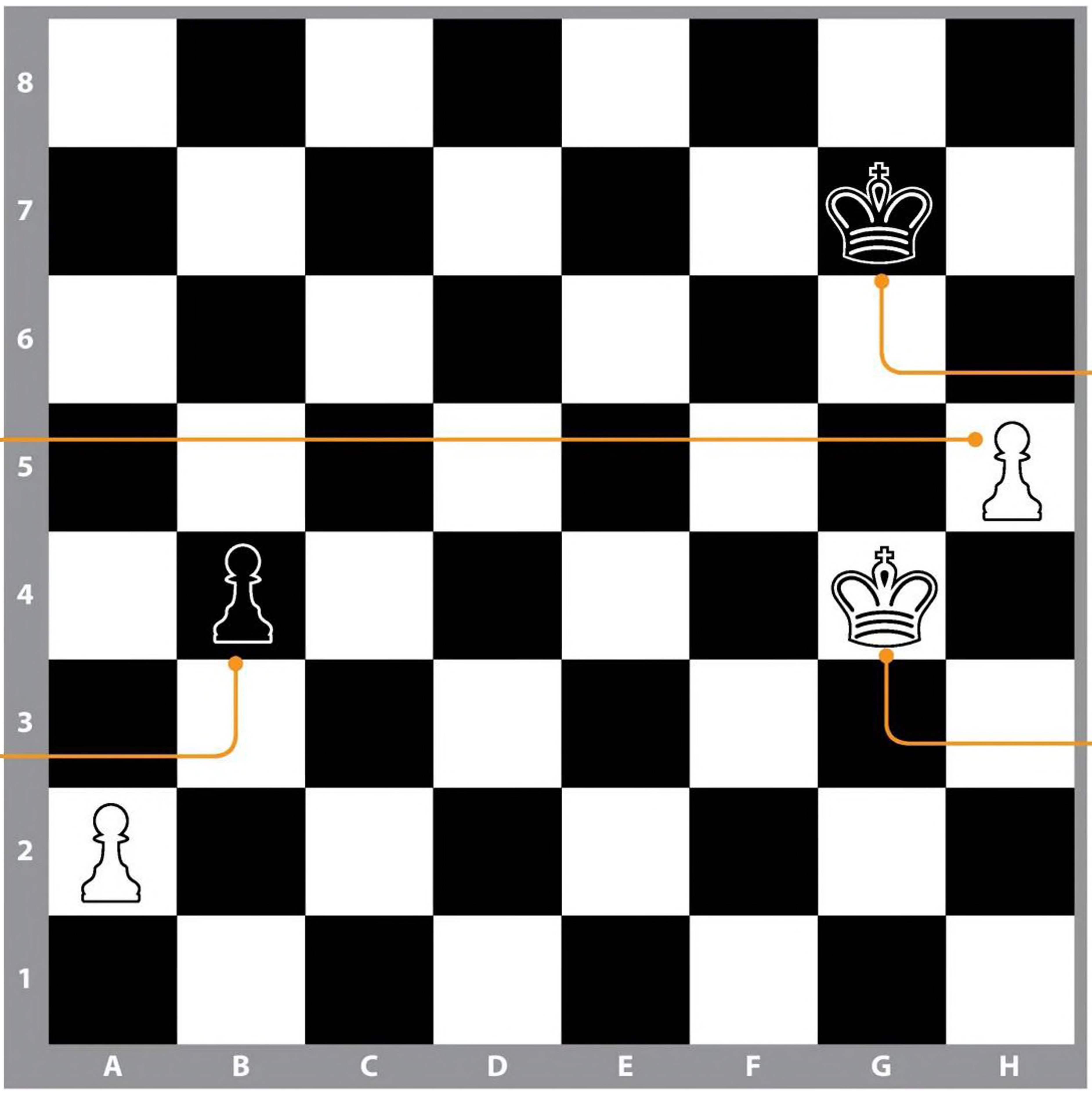
03: A bizarre situation In this highly unusual situation, it could easily be deemed that a possibility of a checkmate is impossible. This would then lead to an agreed draw.



04: The fifty-move rule The fifty-move rule was imposed in this situation because no pieces were captured and no pawns were moved in the previous 50 moves. This is a draw.

Playing the game

Time to stop Not enough pieces

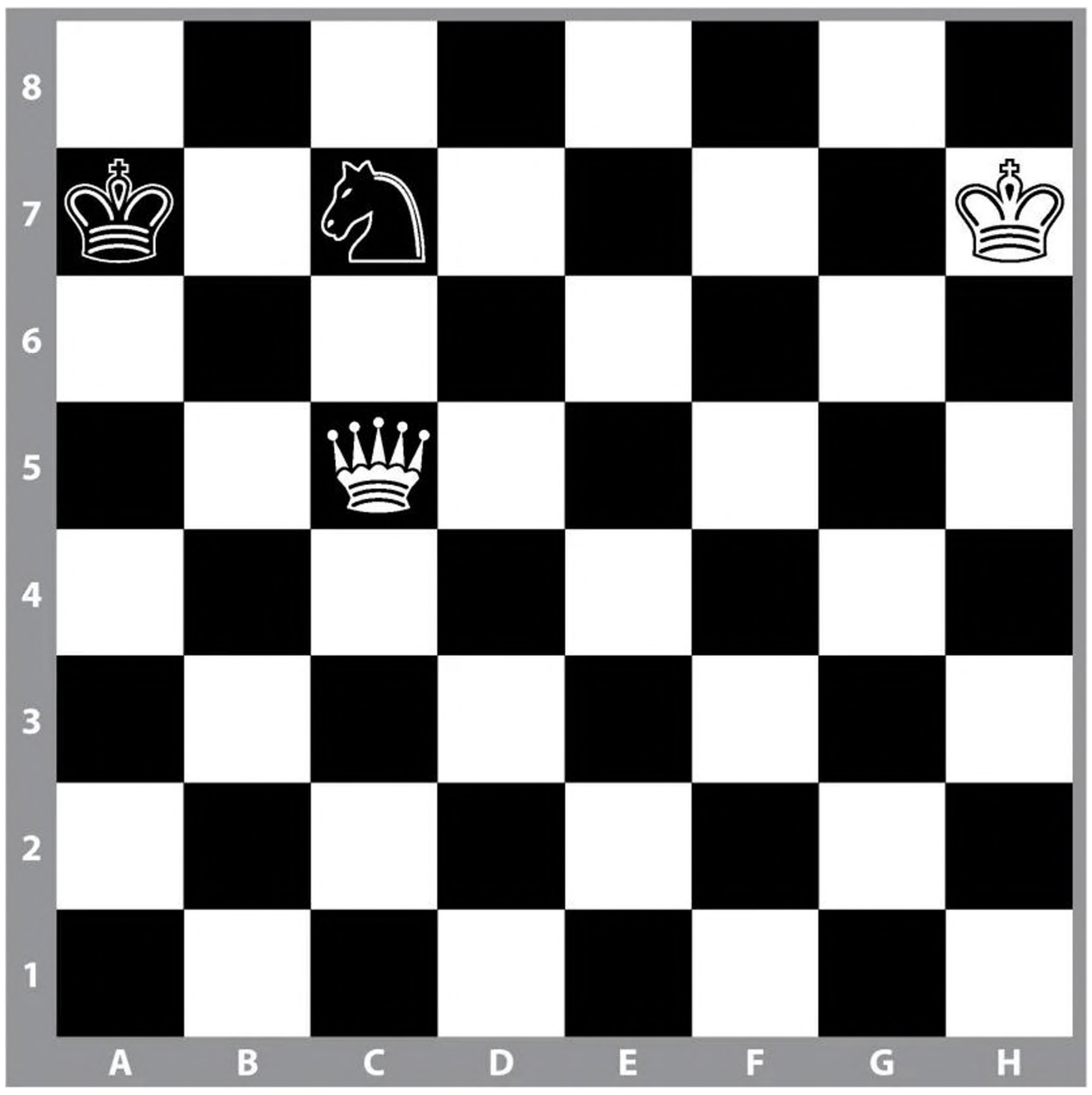


1. Really a draw? White has just moved its right-hand pawn past the king and while this situation may not look like a draw, it certainly will be

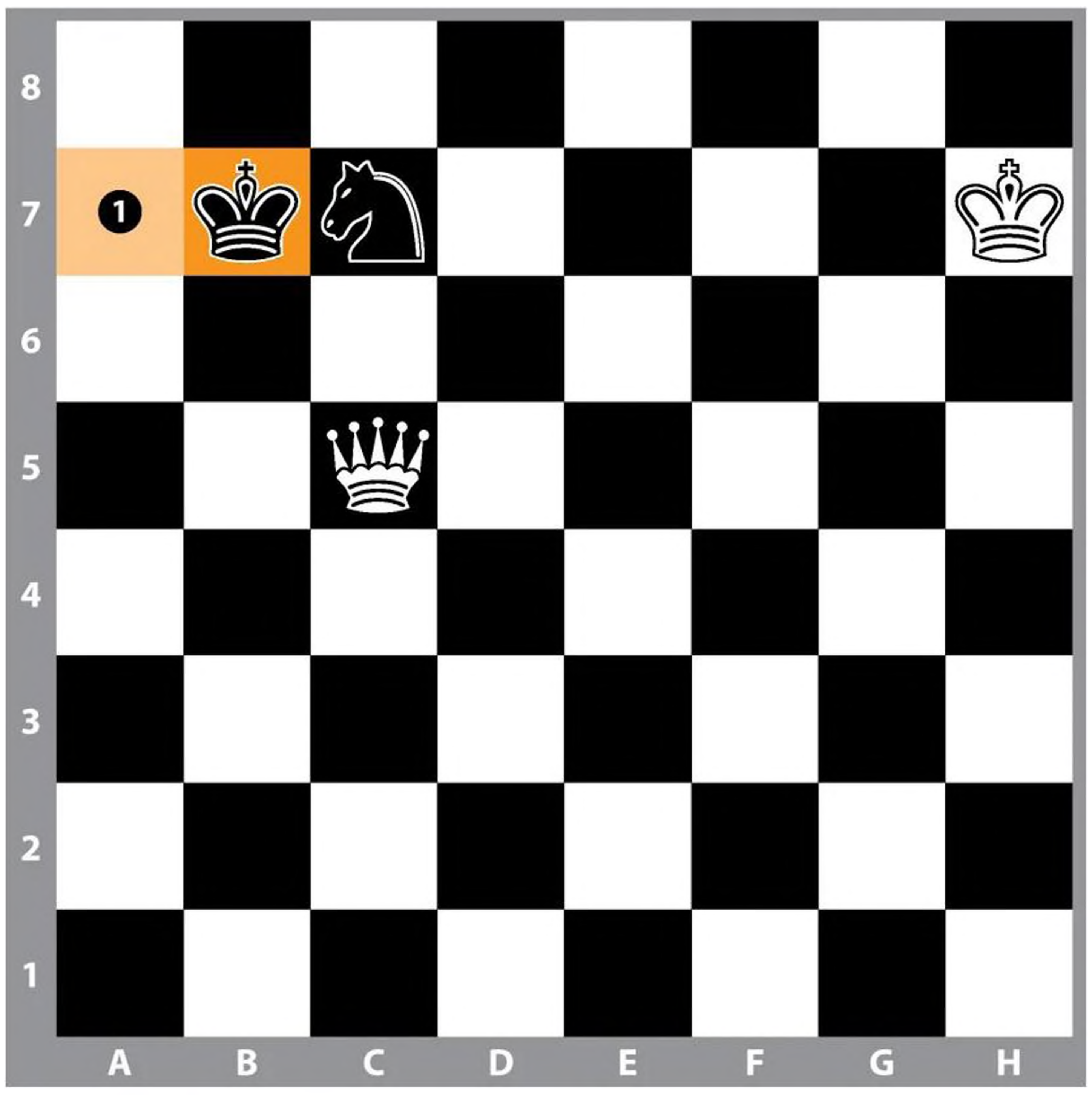
2. Cannot promote Black would ideally like to promote its remaining pawn, but cannot do so as white is currently blocking it from moving at all

3. The king can't help The king will not be able to force a decisive move even with the pawn next to it and so this exact situation cannot produce a win

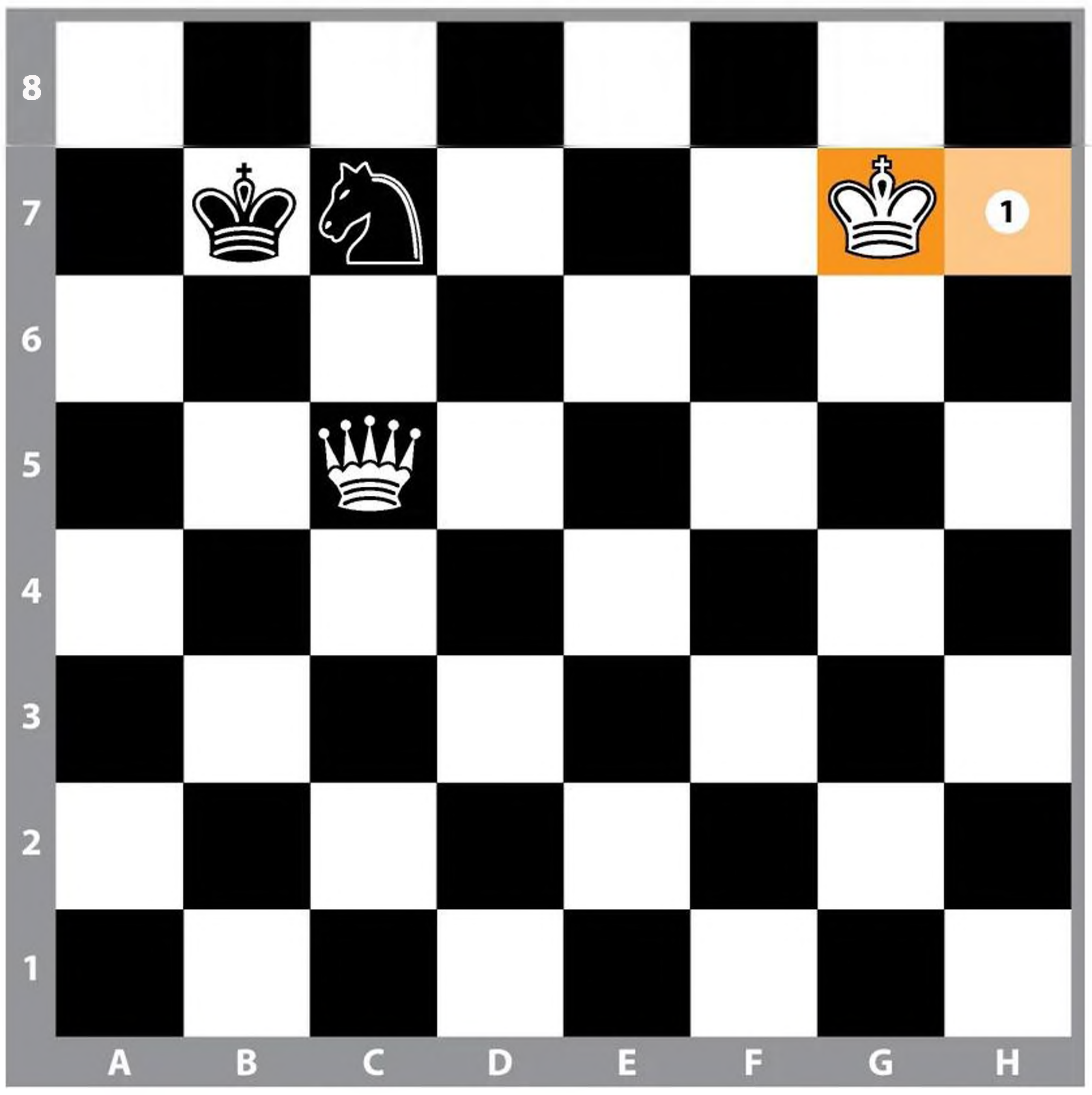
4. Agree to draw The game could conceivably continue for some time with moves being made by both sides, but an agreement to draw makes more sense



01: Tough for black Black is in a predicament here because white has the advantage with a queen as opposed to black's knight. It's a close game, but white is the favourite.



02: A simple move Black moves the king(1) next to the knight, which looks like an innocuous move, but it will prove to be of some importance at the very end of the game.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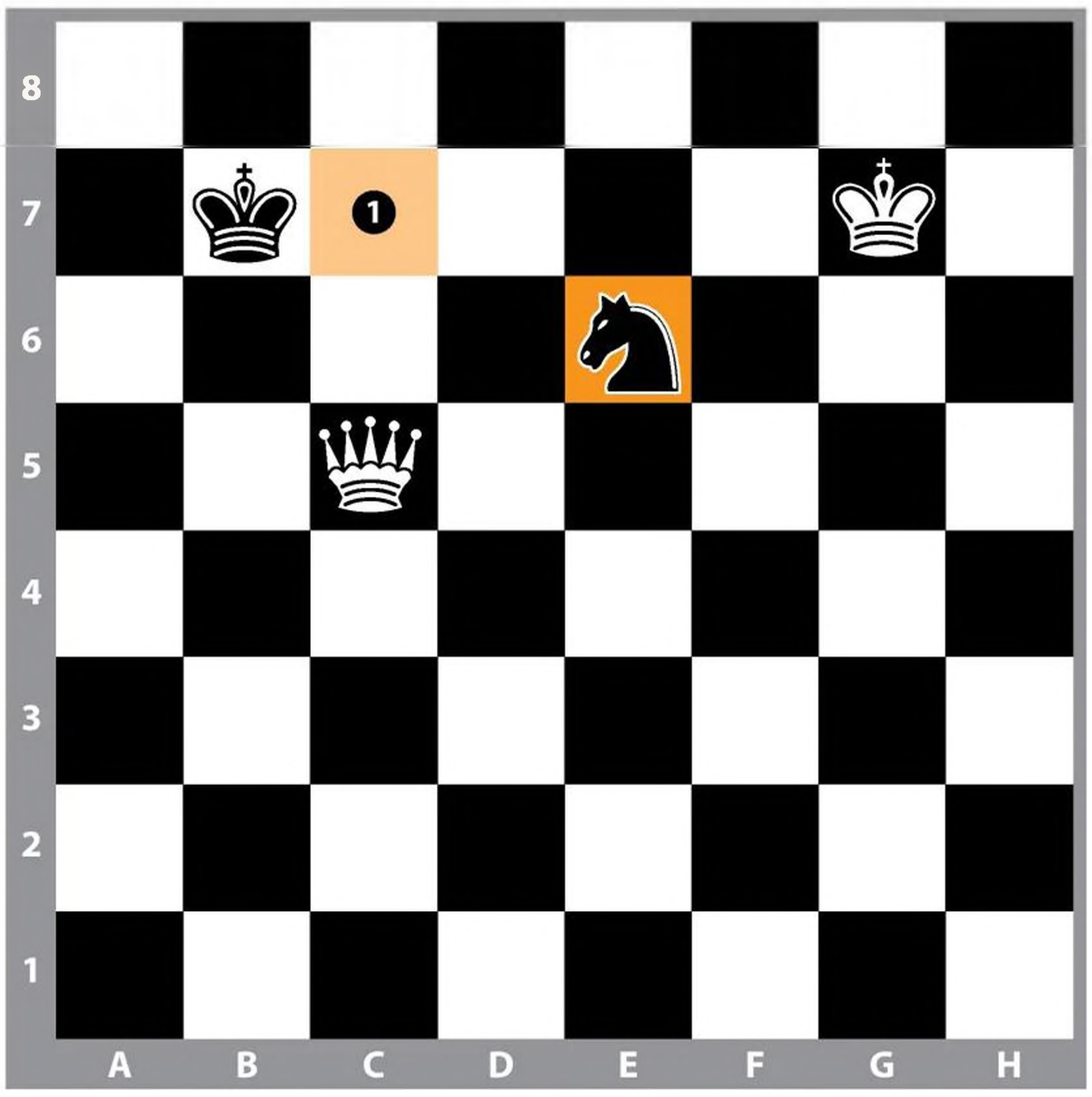
03: Trying to attack White moves the king(1) in order to exert some pressure with the higher-value combination it has, but it may be missing a potential planned problem.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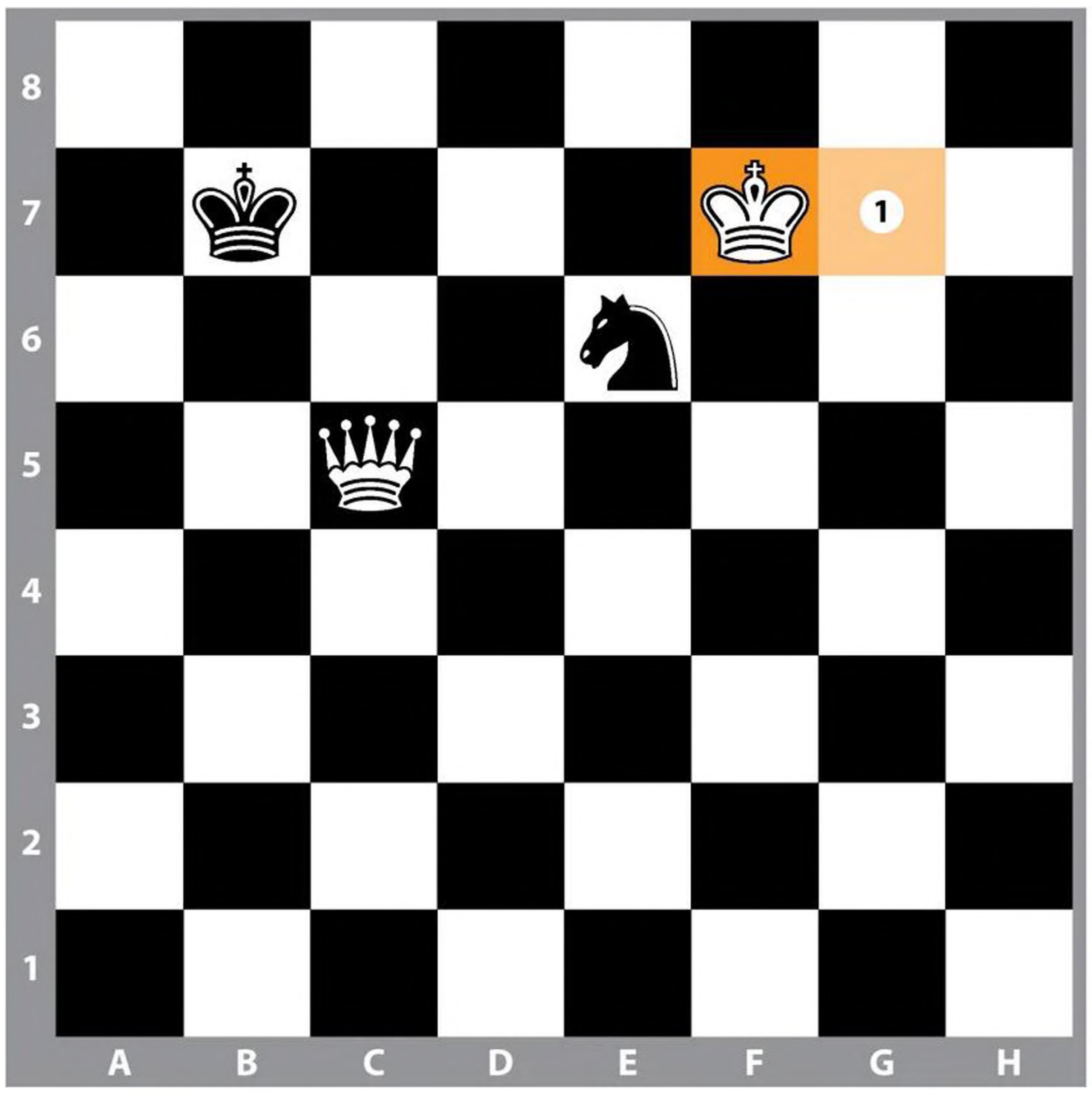
04: The killer fork Black moves the knight(1) to create a fork on white's king and queen. It is a decisive move because white now has no choice but to save the king.

> "When white moves the king, black can now take the high-value queen with the knight"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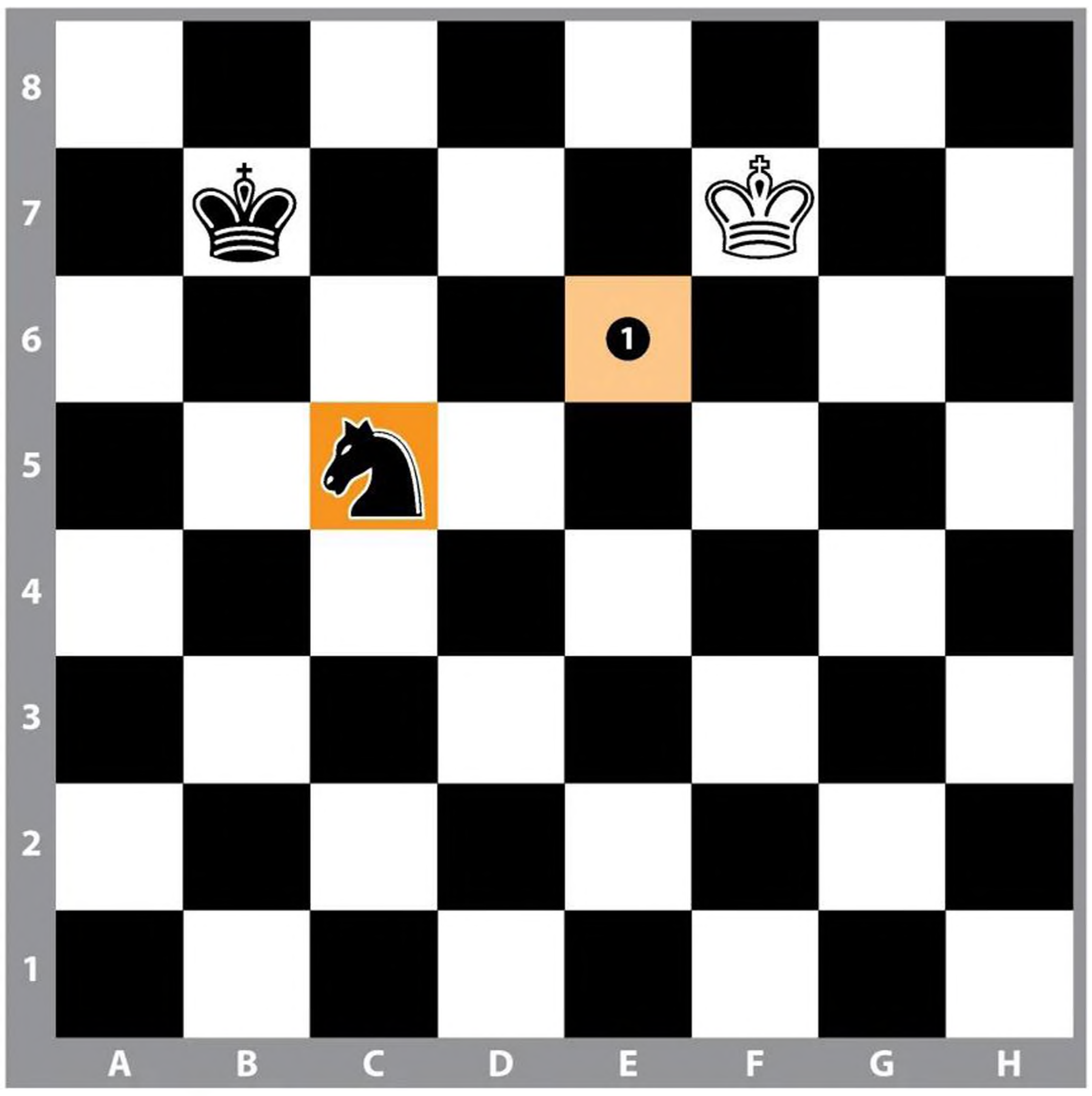
05: A lost queen When white moves the king(1), black can now take the high-value queen with the knight, which completely changes the position and balance of the game.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06: A drawn game With only the kings plus the black knight(1) remaining on the board, this is likely to lead to a draw from what was once a losing situation for black.

Beginner tactics

Once you've got a handle on the basics of chess, it's important to get to grips with some beginner tactics

Top tip

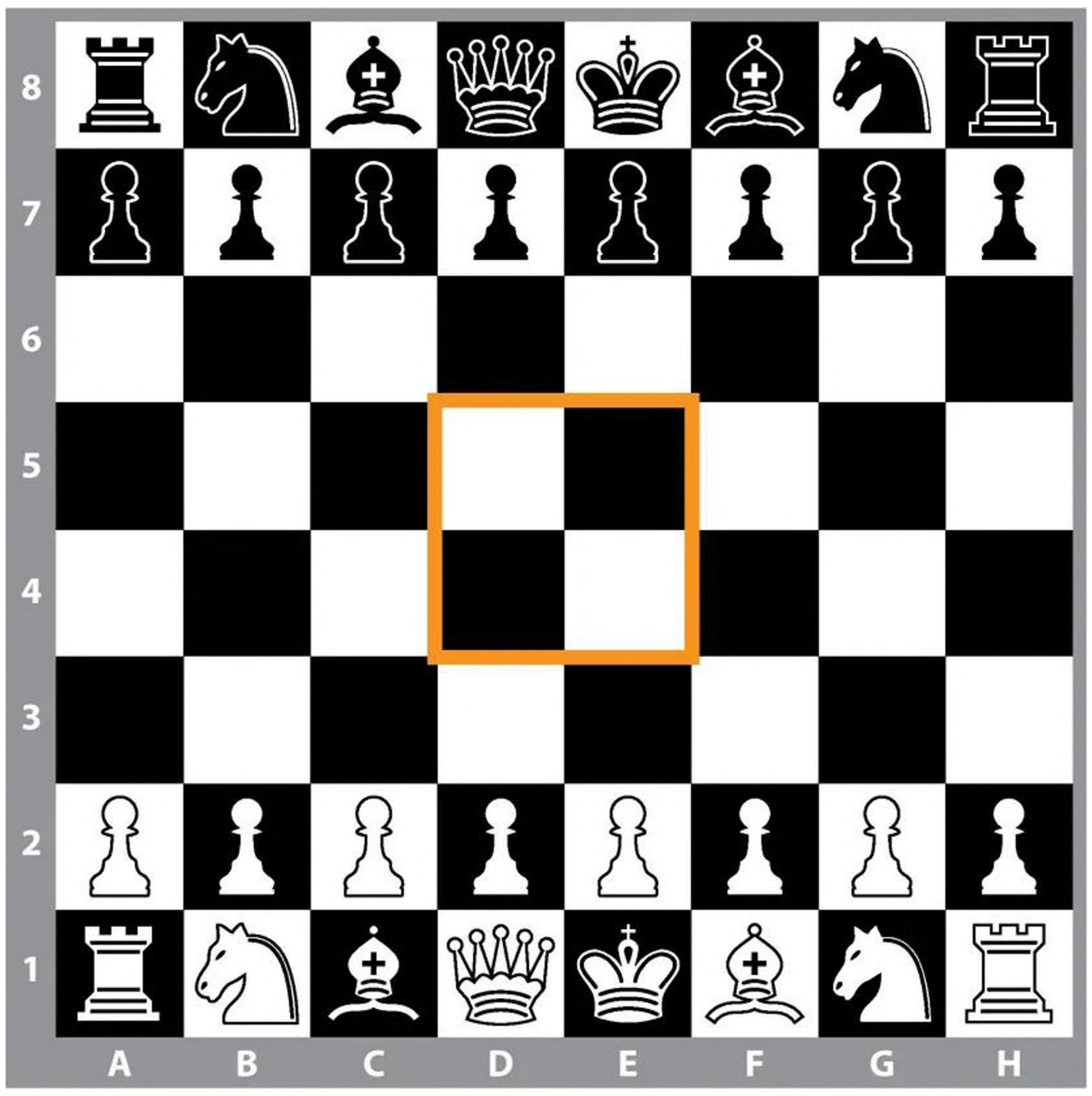
Learn how to use pawns

Pawns are plentiful and expendable, so don't be afraid to use them to help you with your learning curve. Games can be won or lost by the tactics applied to pawns.

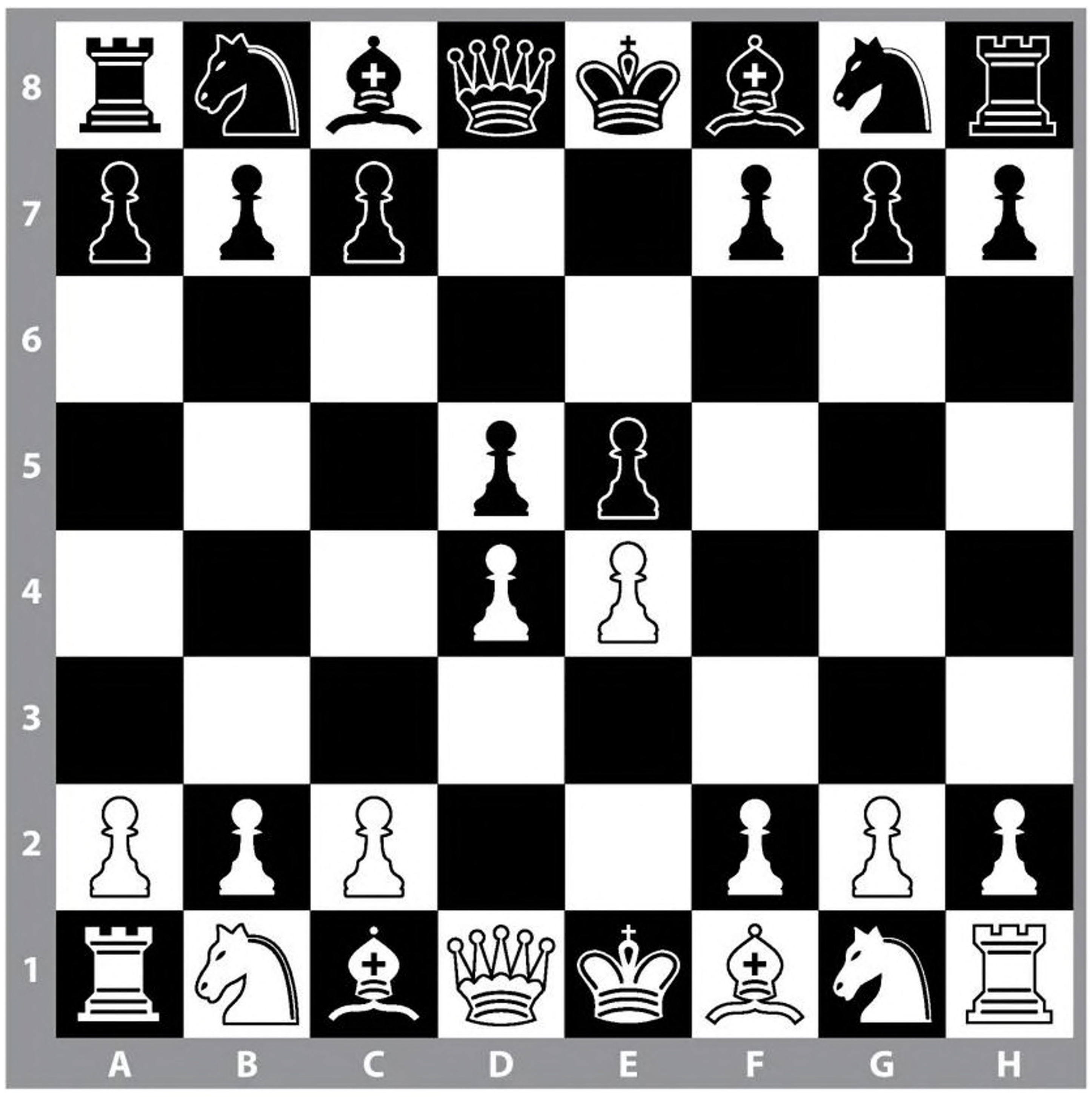
Chess is a game of strategy, tactics, prediction and forward thinking. It is important in a game to be able to think one or two moves ahead of your current position, calculating the most likely moves of your opponents before they make them, and adjusting your strategy accordingly. It's also equally important not to get ahead of yourself with your moves. Sometimes a game has to be played out move by move, and often the most important tactic for a player is to get their most valuable pieces into strong positions across the board. There are several beginner tactics to be learnt about positioning in a game to give you a better chance of success. Interception is one of the easiest tactics to apply in a game. This consists of blocking an opponent's piece with one of your own, ideally a pawn which has little value against other pieces. In the following tutorials you'll learn some beginner tactics and general rules of thumb to be applied, which will help you to stay in the game and start conquering your opponents. Opponents will adapt to your plays, so you must always be ready to bend the rules of tactical chess playing.

Controlling the centre

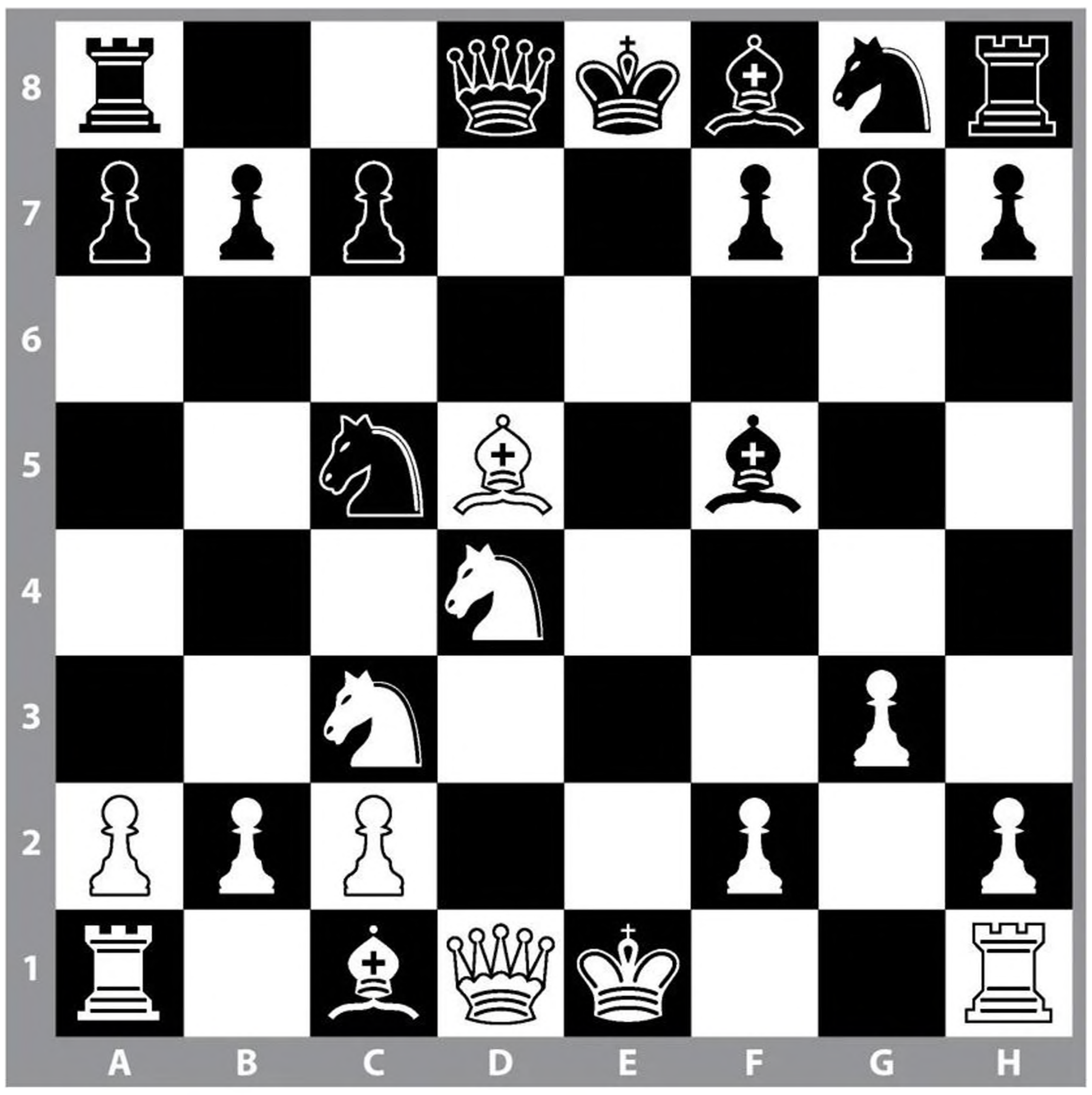
The centre of the chessboard is a crucial piece of real estate in a game. Understanding how to control the centre of the board can help lead you to victory over your opponent



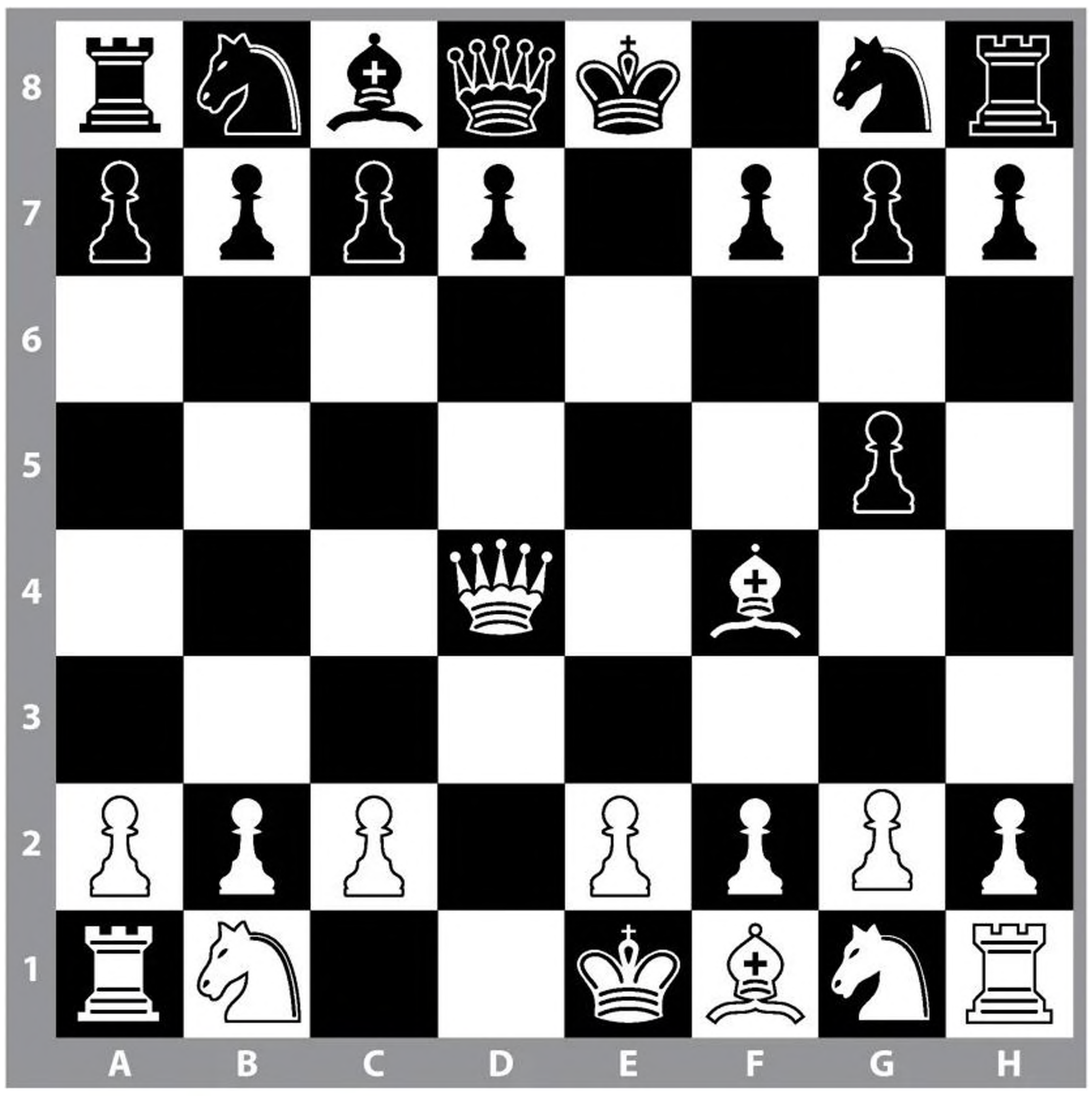
01: Centre squares The d4, e4, d5 and e5 squares rest at the centre of the board. If you can take control of these squares you will have much more control over the game.



02: Pawn control Getting your pawns in the centre squares creates a blockade of movement from either side of the board, plus they are less valuable pieces to lose.



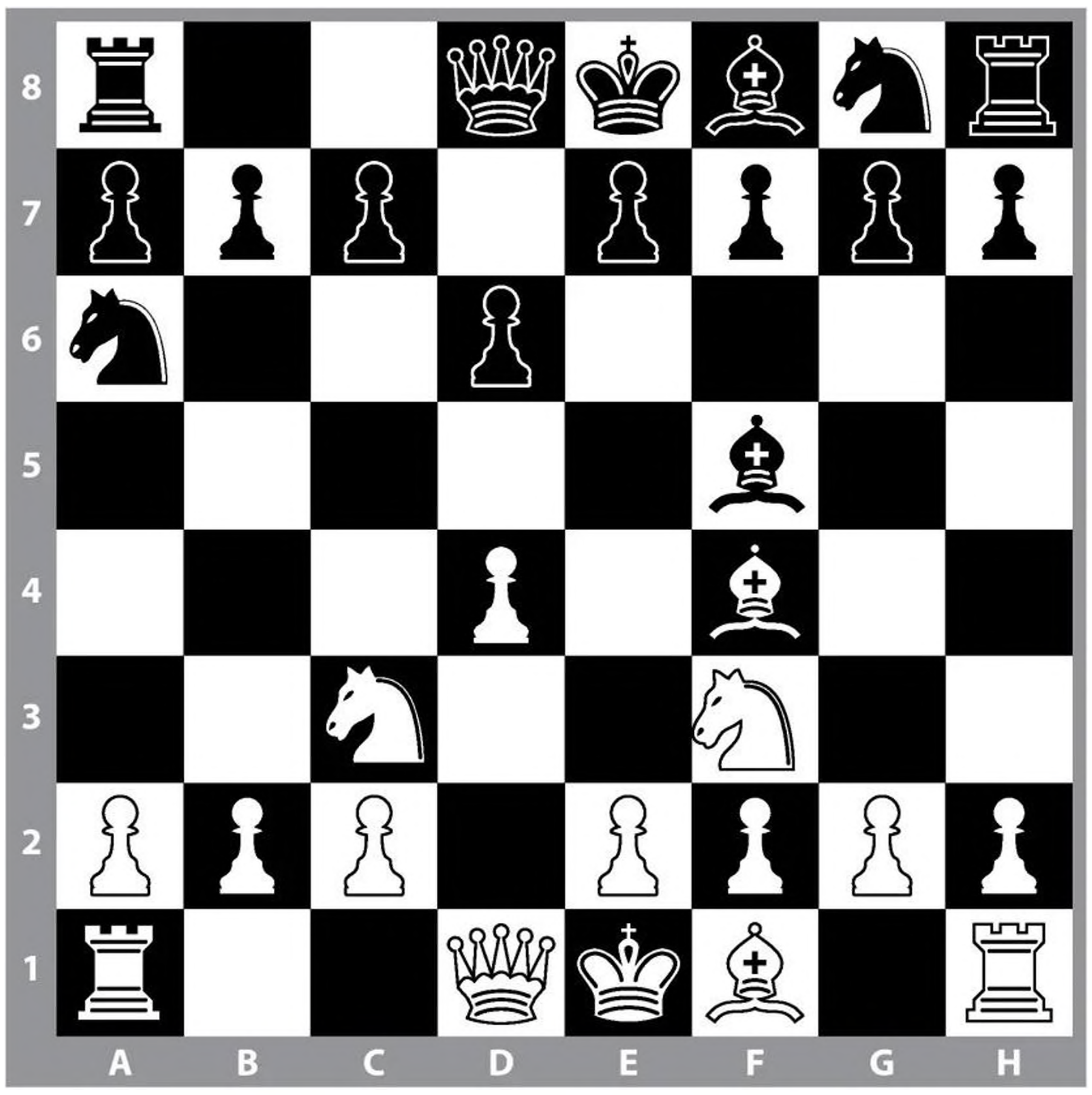
03: Knights and bishops A knight with access to the centre squares provides an attack and defence position. Bishops in the centre create a diagonal line of defence and attack.



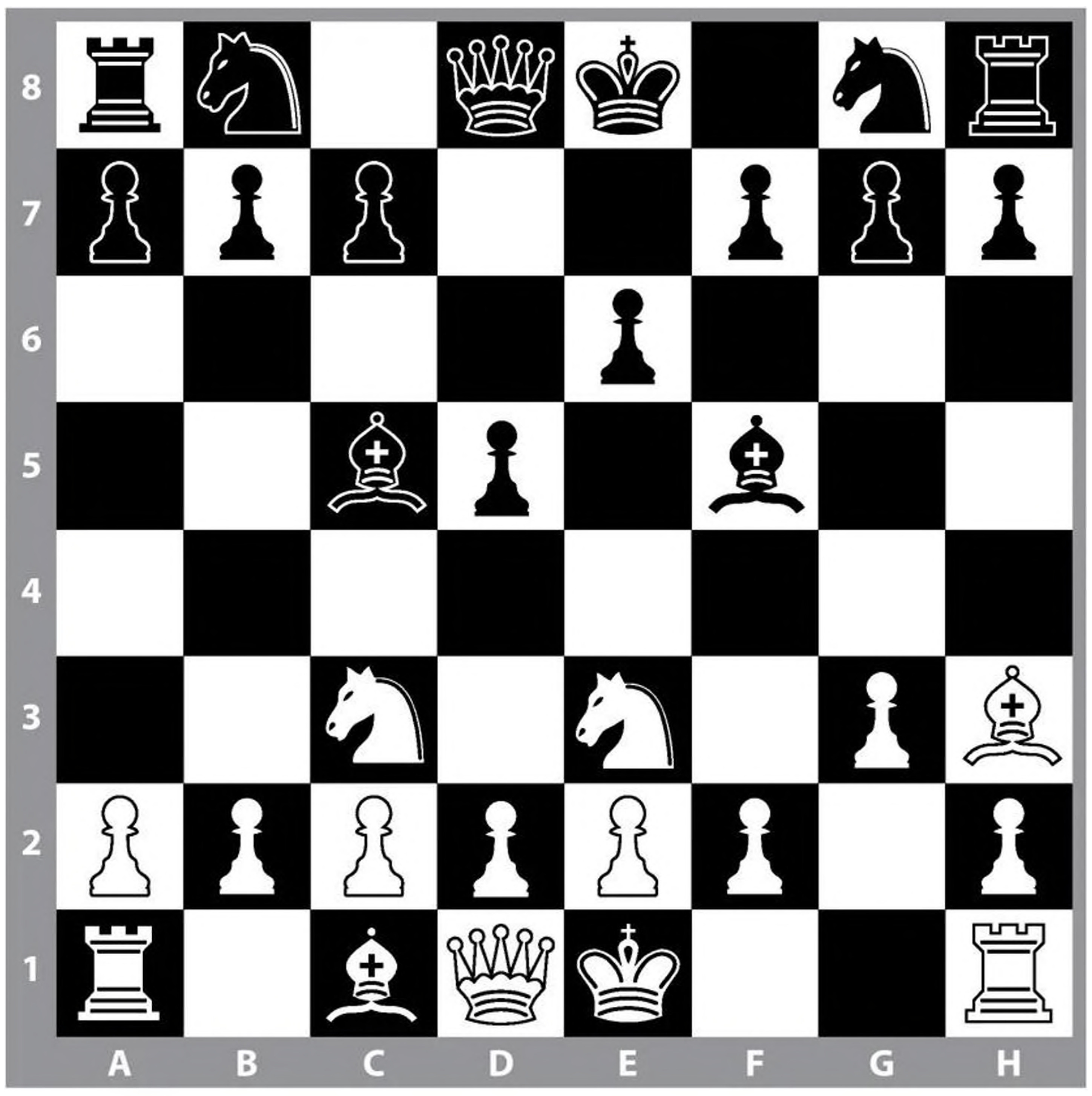
04: Vulnerable zone Try to avoid placing any of your key pieces there. Although your queen can do a lot from the centre, you may have to waste a turn retreating her.

Developing knights and bishops

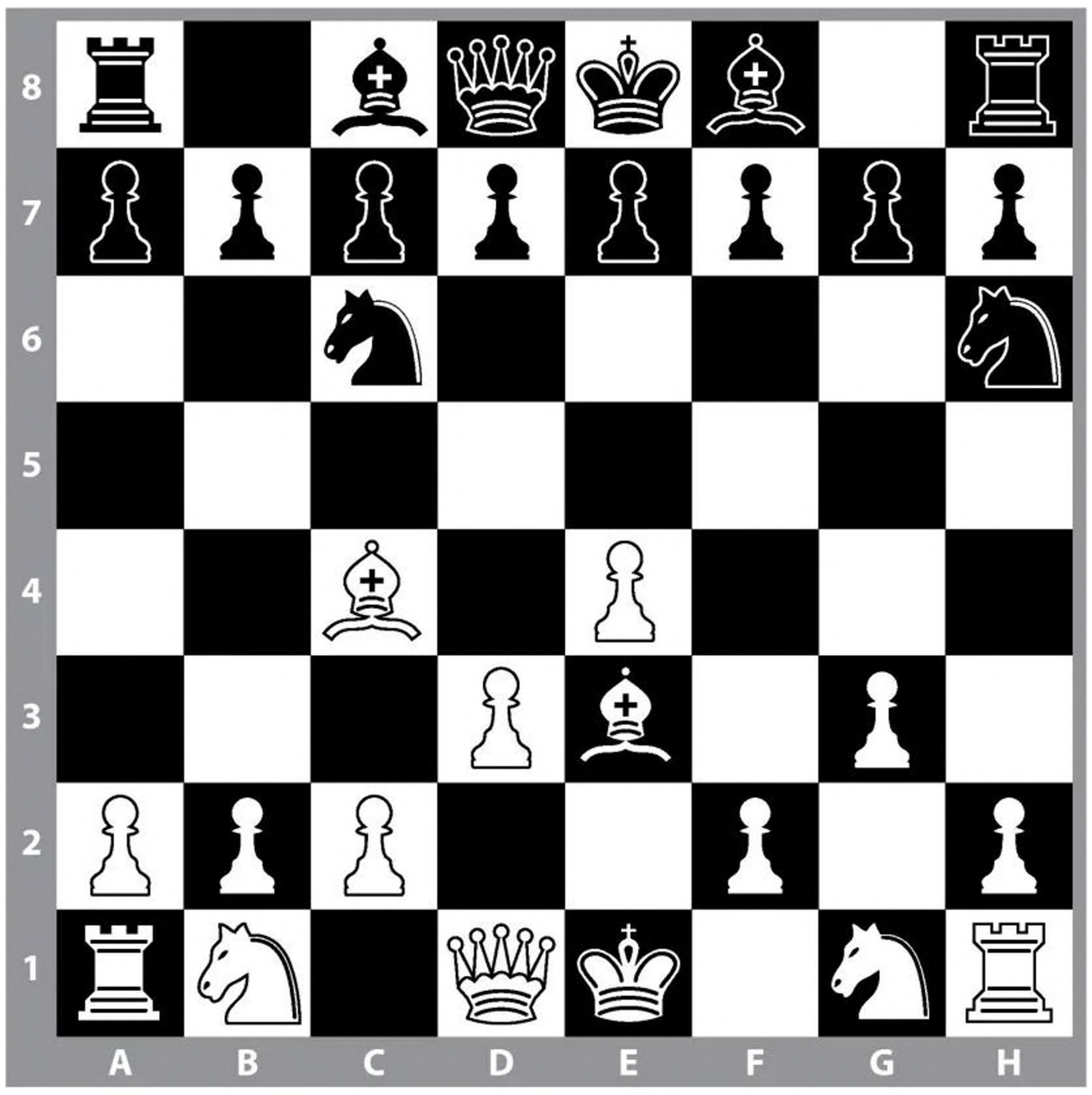
A beginner's rule of thumb in chess is to develop your knights and bishops ahead of other pieces. This is a good starting tactic to quickly set yourself up into an attacking position



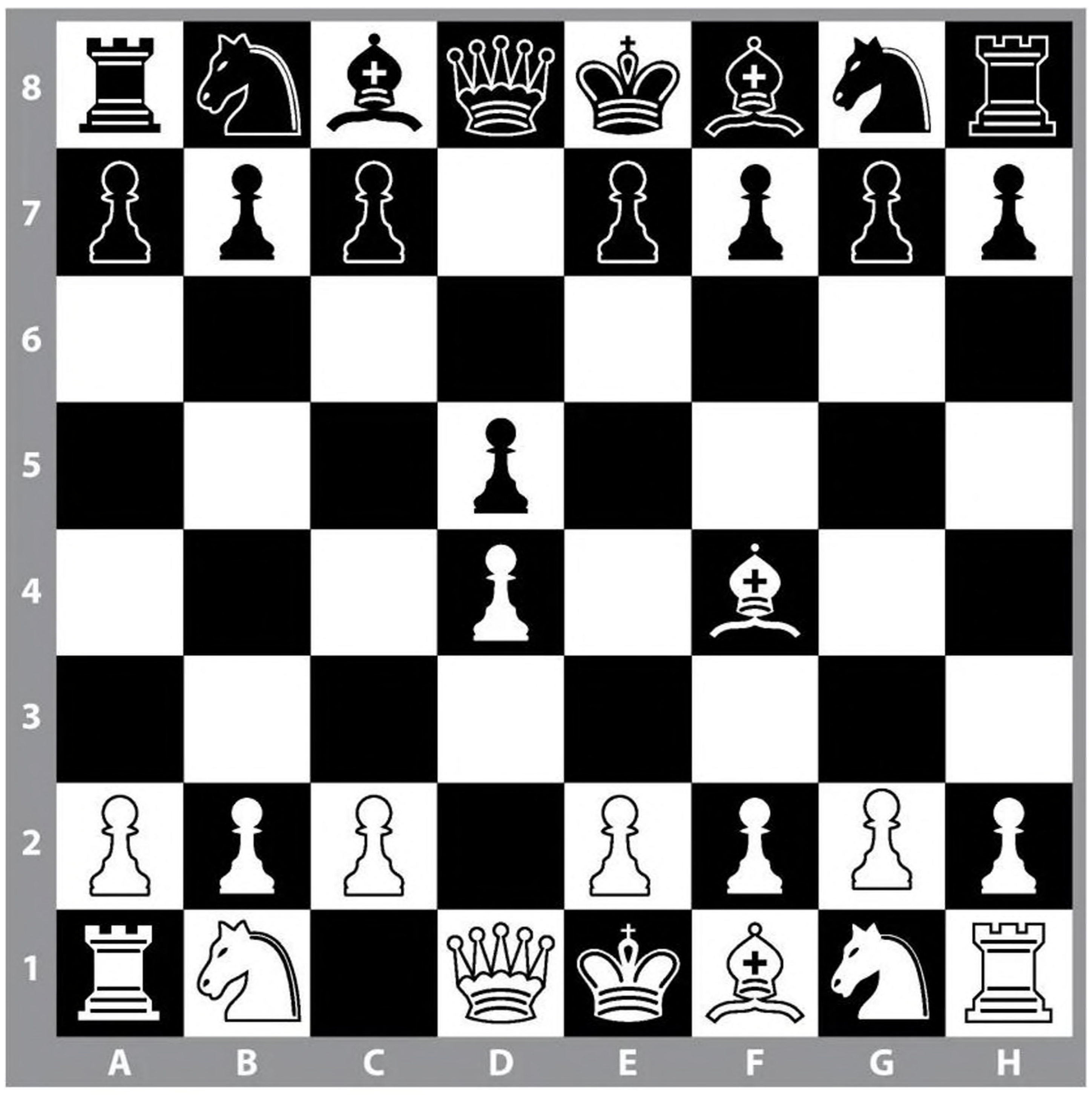
01: Knights before bishops This saying refers to the basic tactical approach of getting your knights forward and toward the centre before positioning your bishops.



02: Why knights and bishops? They are both pieces that can quickly access and control the centre squares without putting themselves in a vulnerable position.



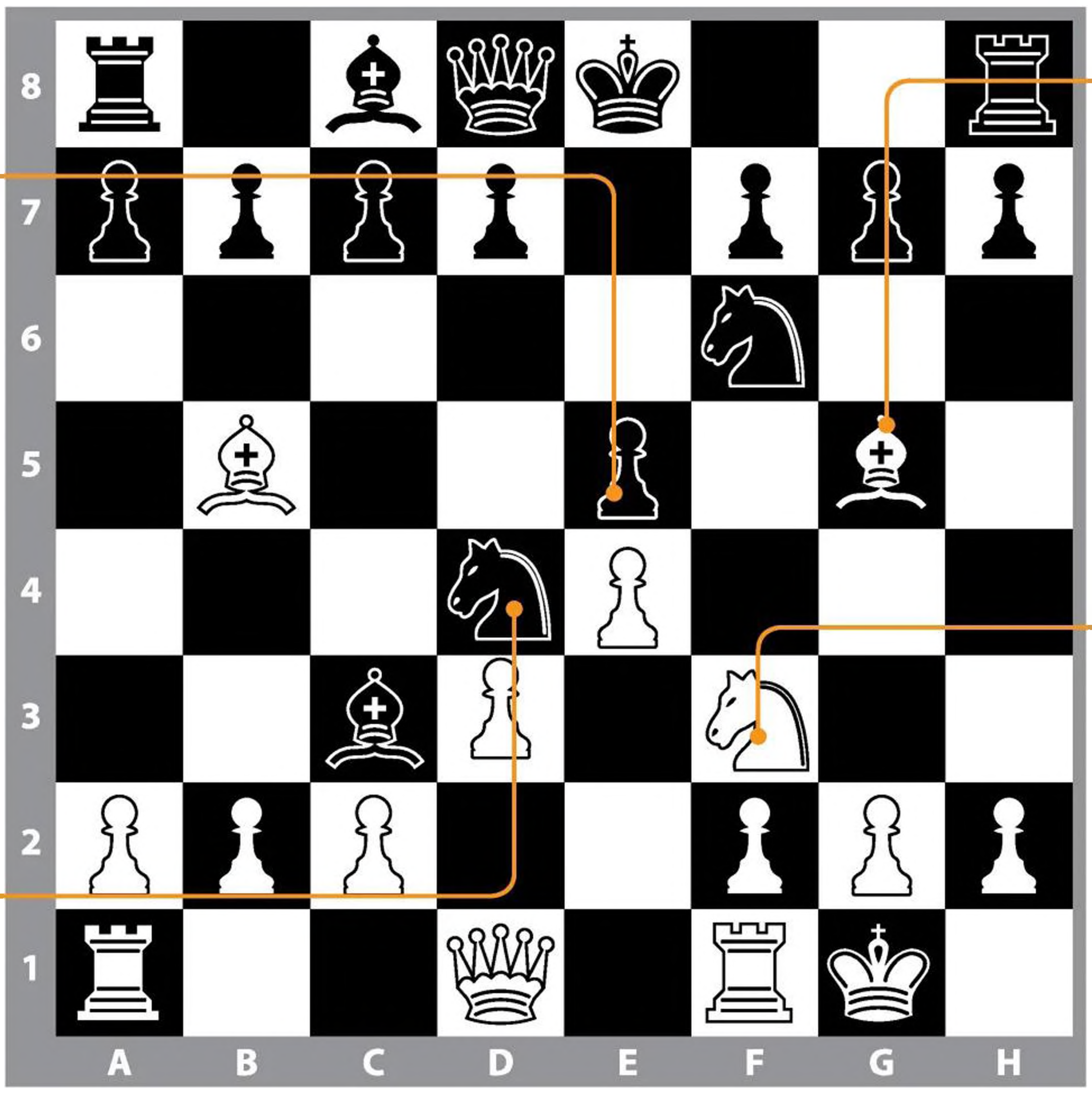
03: Exceptions to the rule There is always an exception to 'knights before bishops'. Here the white queen and bishops have created a strong diagonal line of defence.



04: Bishop's Opening The Bishop's Opening is a classic opening tactic, not often used nowadays. It can surprise an opponent and have them rethink their opening strategy.

Knights and bishops gain control

Restricting movement and gaining control with knights and bishops

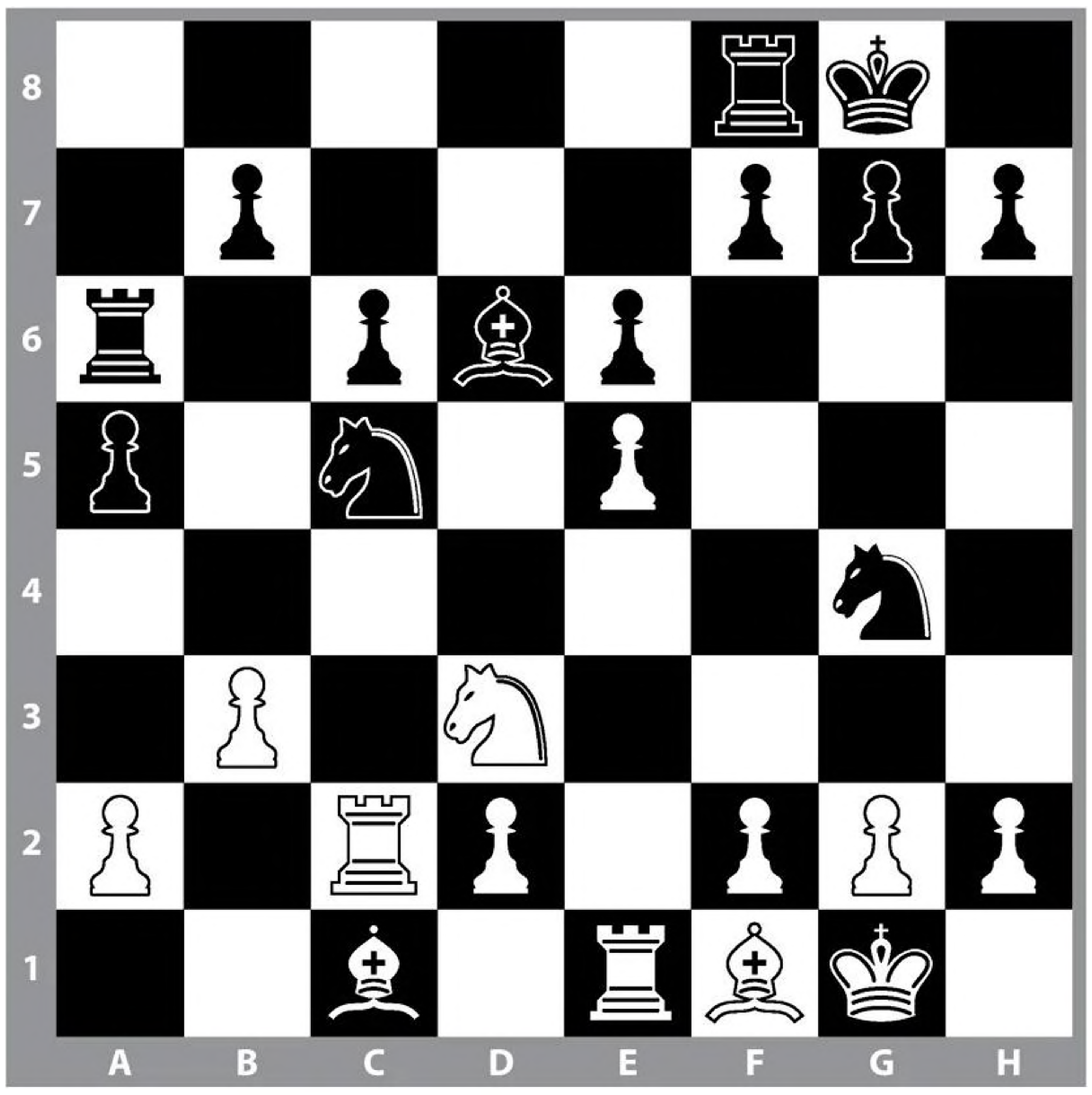


1. Knights' centre control
Knights on both the black and white side have control over the centre of the board and its surrounding area, restricting movement

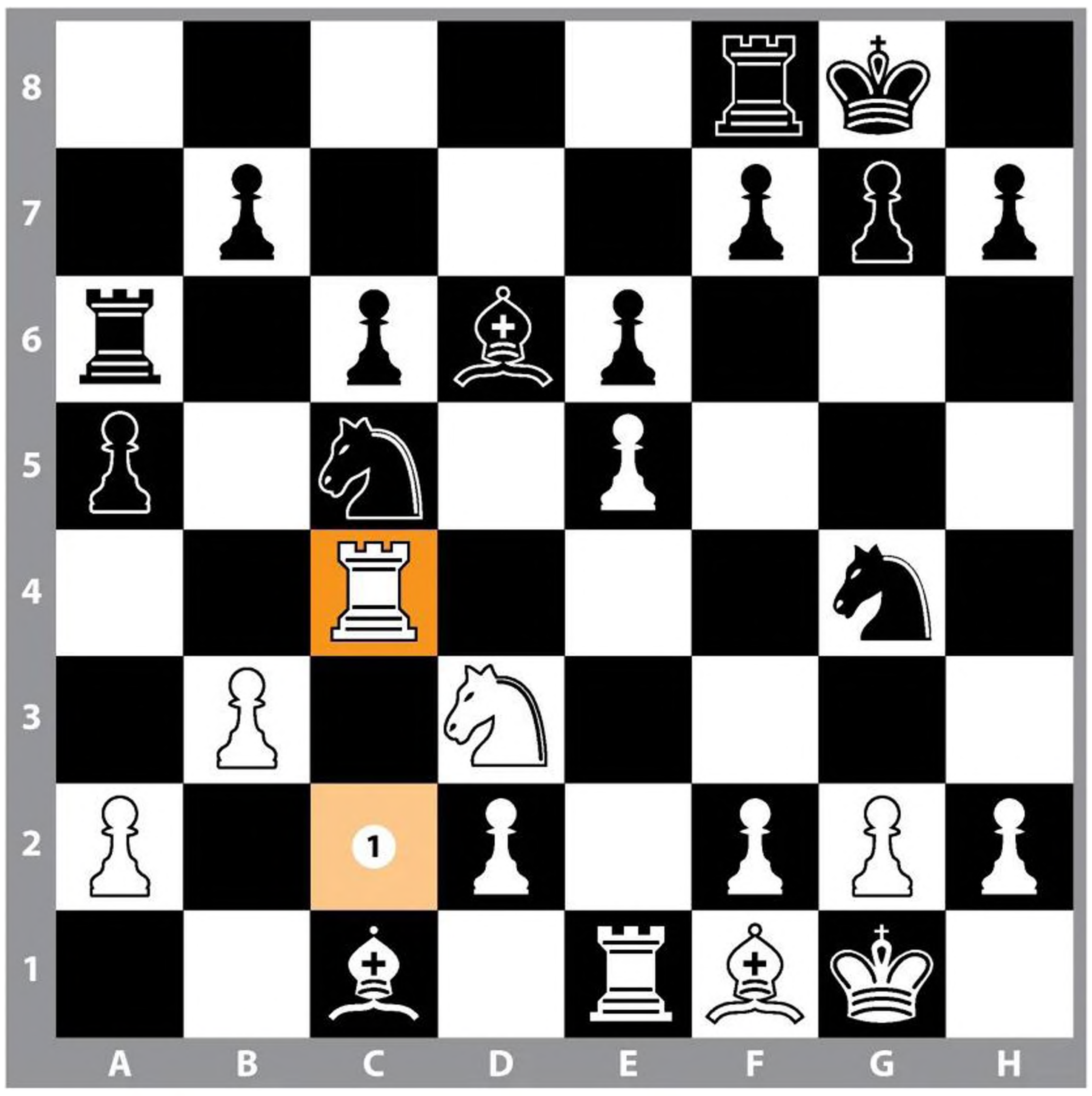
2. Bishop placement
Both the white bishops have been able to develop. The g5 bishop has temporarily blocked the f6 knight, as it must protect the queen

3. Exchanging pieces
If necessary, both the black and white knights and bishops could exchange pieces if they felt it beneficial to free up the board

4. Advancing queen and knight
By developing the white knight from f3 to e5, both the white knight and queen can advance further along the board without being taken



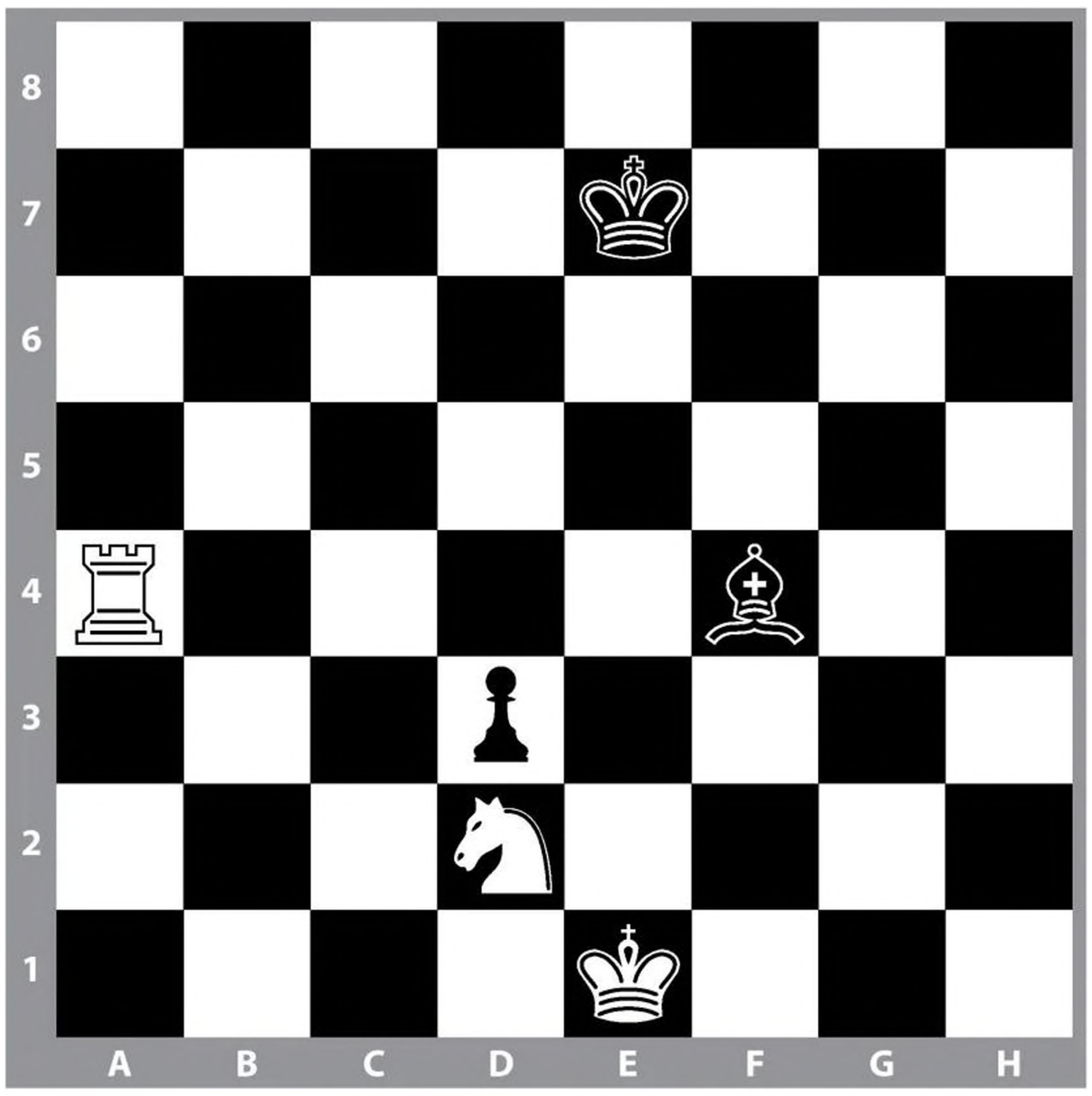
01: Controlling the centre If you have more control over the centre than your opponent, avoid exchanging pieces, even if it means advancing or strengthening your defence.



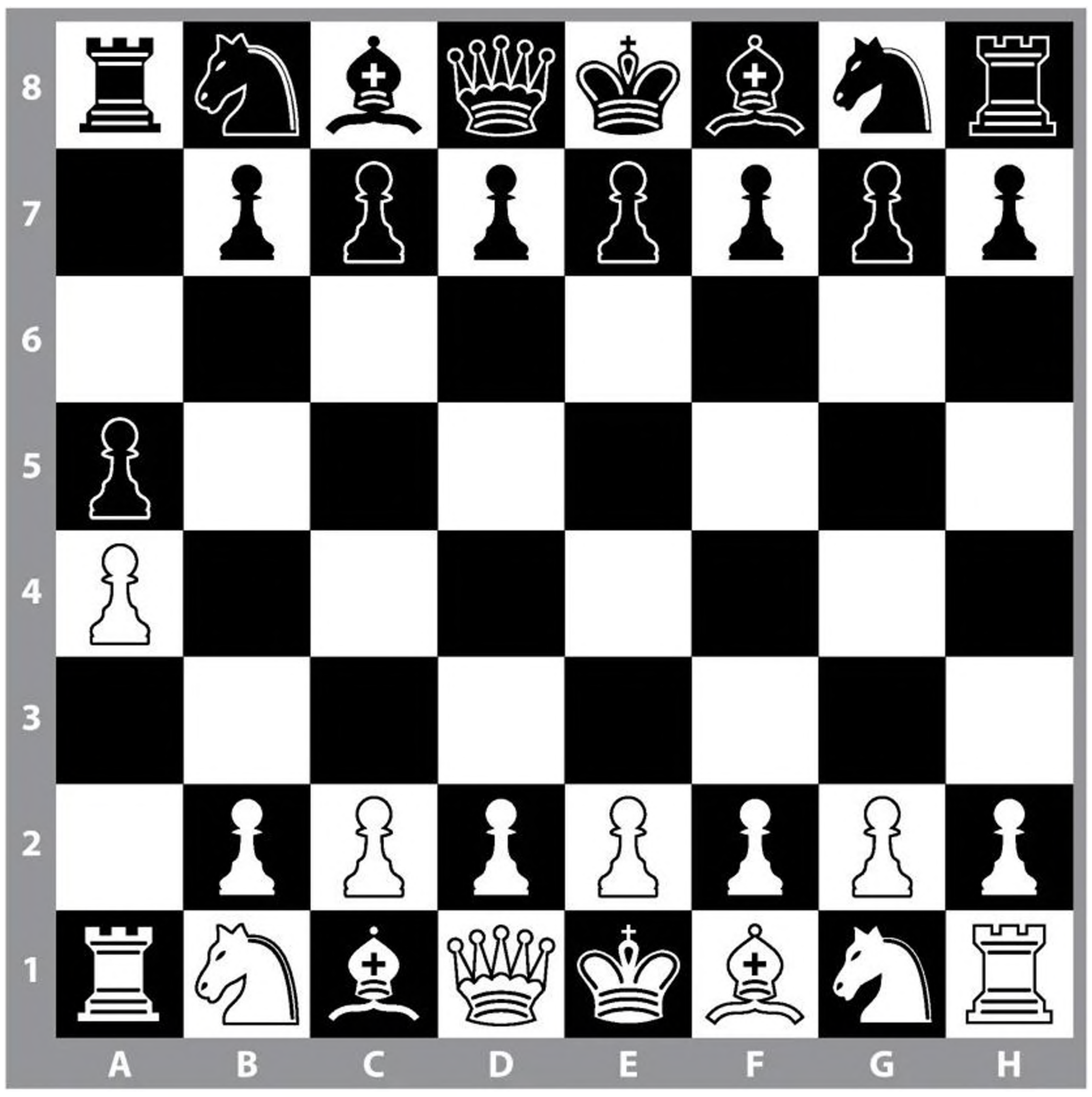
02: Advance, don't exchange Rather than beginning a vicious cycle of exchanging pieces, the white rook(1) moves from c2 to c4, ready to attack the black knight on g4.

Pawn blockades

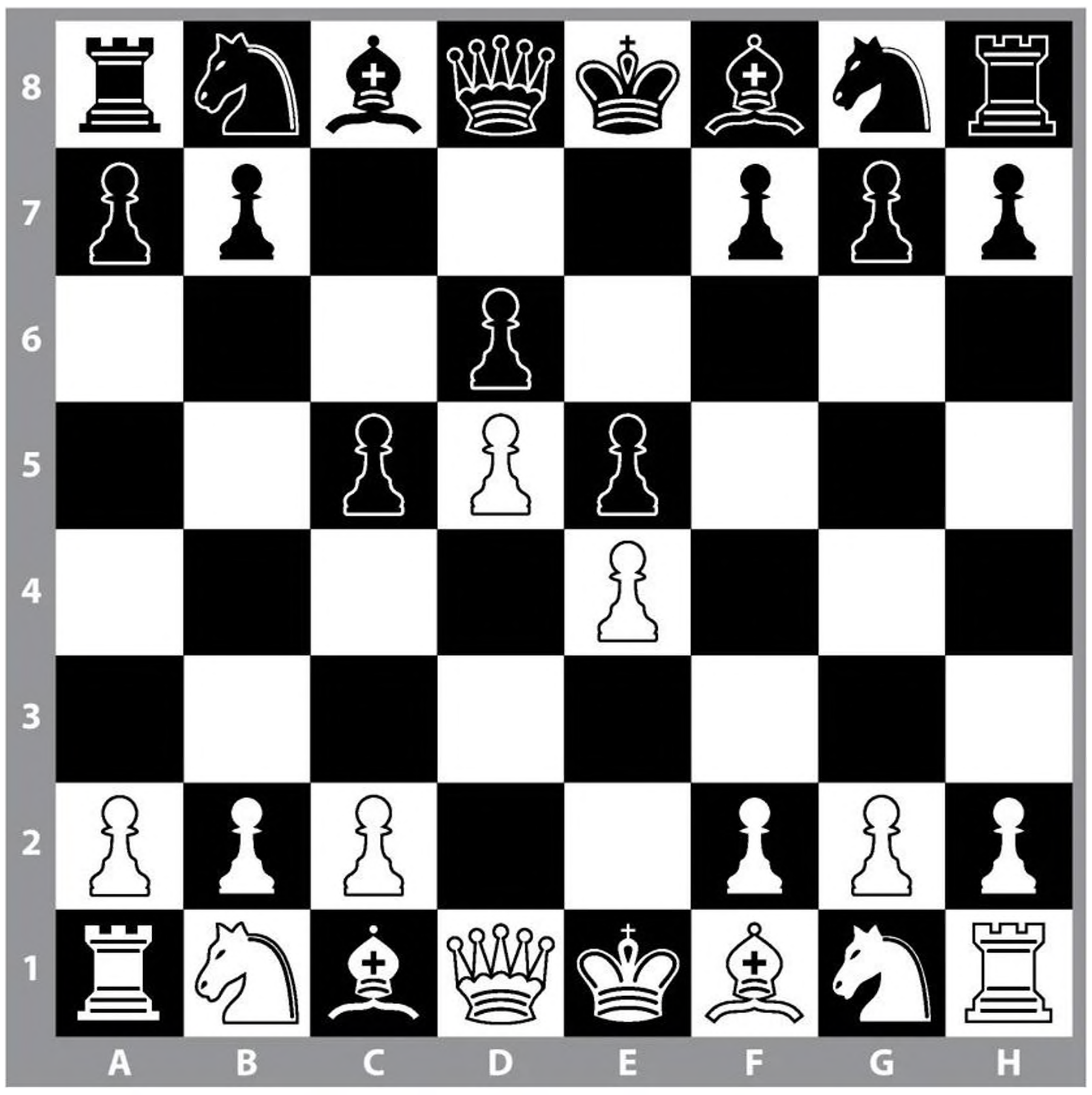
Pawns are expendable infantry, so they can get into strategically strong positions without risk. Blockading a pawn stops it in its tracks and can protect your blocking piece



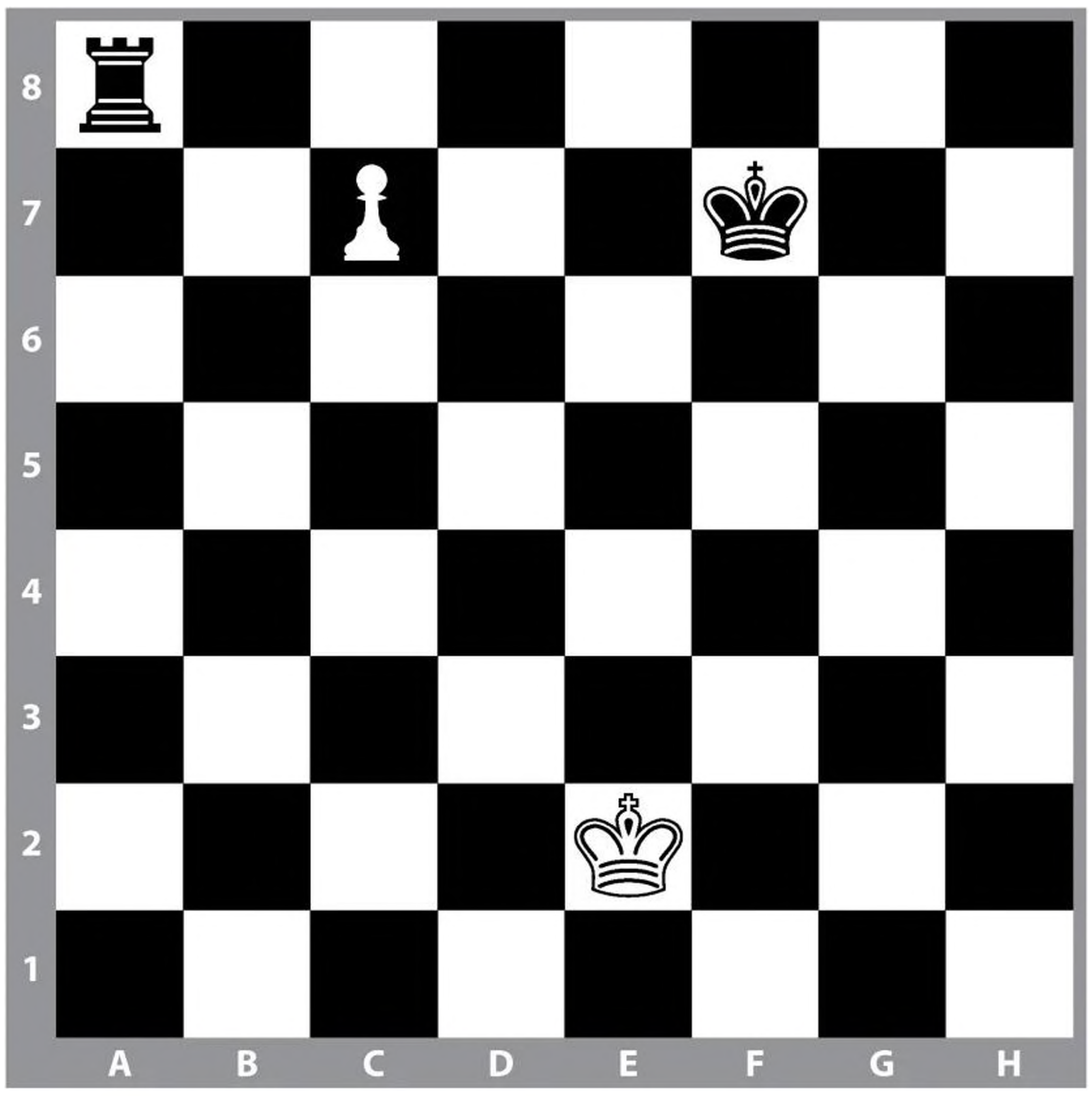
01: Blocking pieces The knight is the perfect piece for blocking a pawn, since it isn't restricted by the pawn's presence if it needs to move, releasing the pawn from the block.



02: Rook pawns Blocking rook pawns with a knight will restrict your knight. Blockading a rook pawn with a rook pawn helps to buffer a rook once it gets developed.



03: Queen/rooks blockade When pawns get into a stalemate with each other, it can change the dynamic of a game, forcing players to work around or disassemble the block.



04: Pawn promotion An opponent may try to promote their pawn near the end of a game. Rooks are the best form of defence against an opponent's promotion attempt.

Pawn blockades

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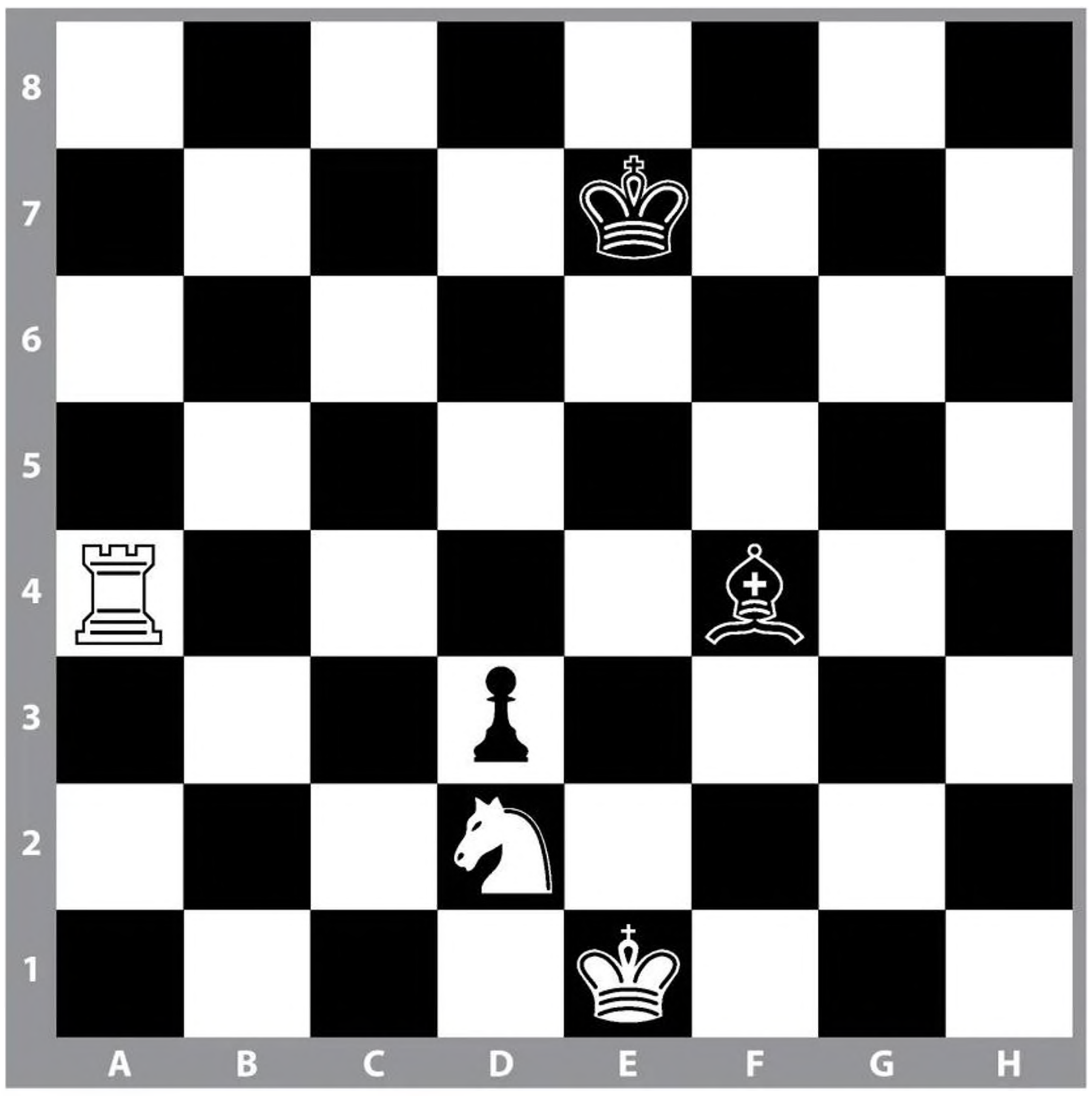

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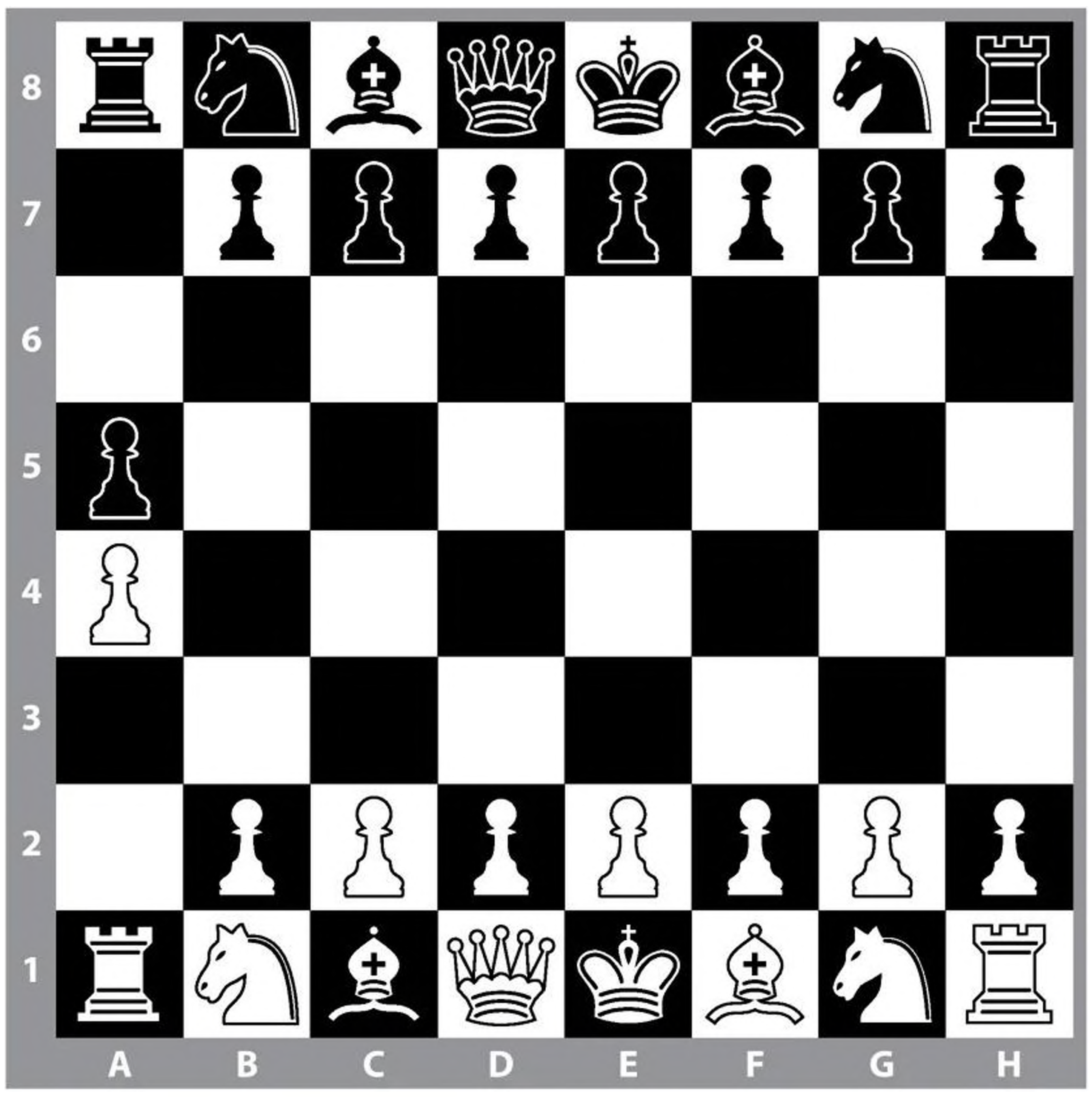

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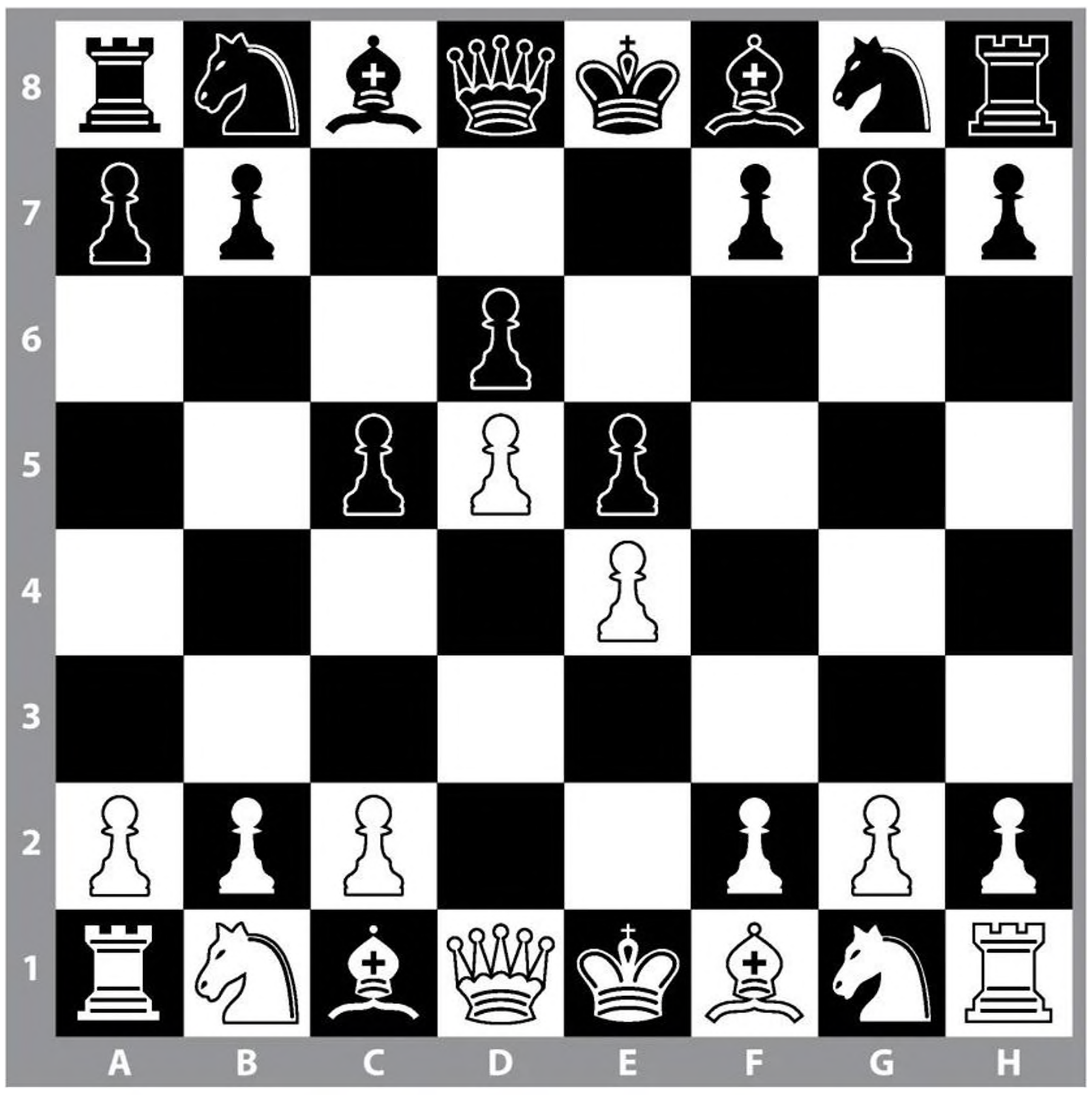

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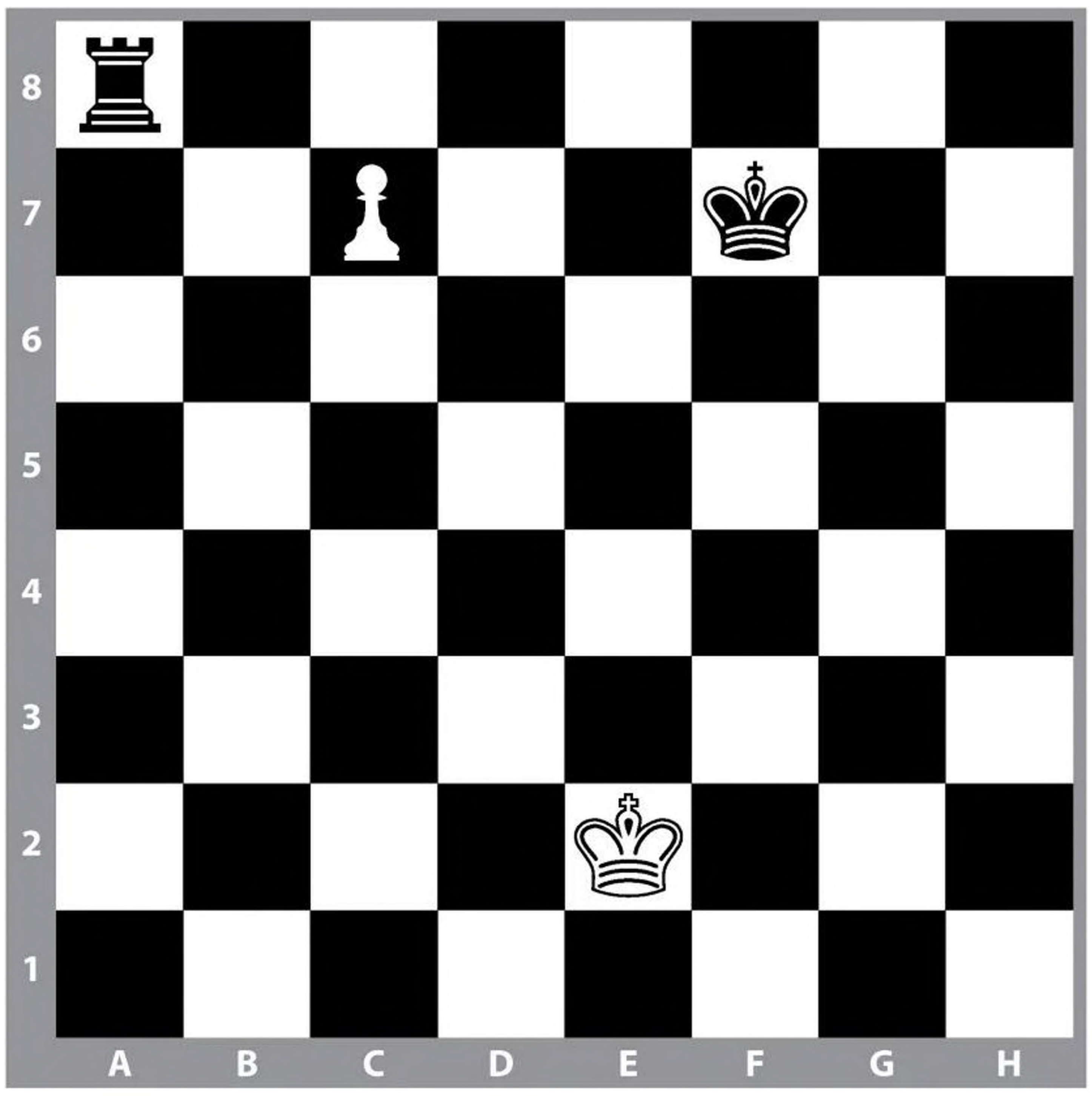

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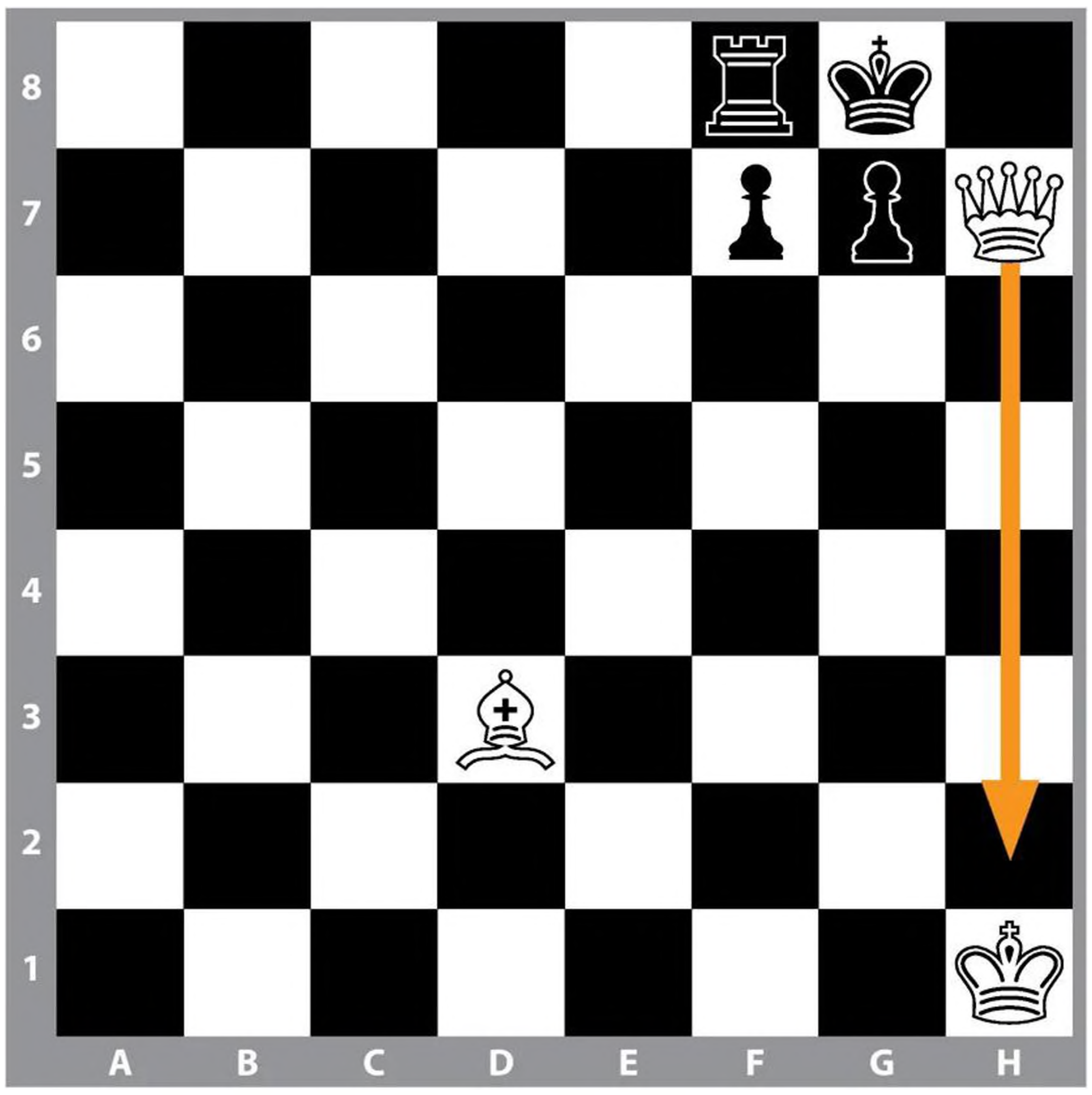
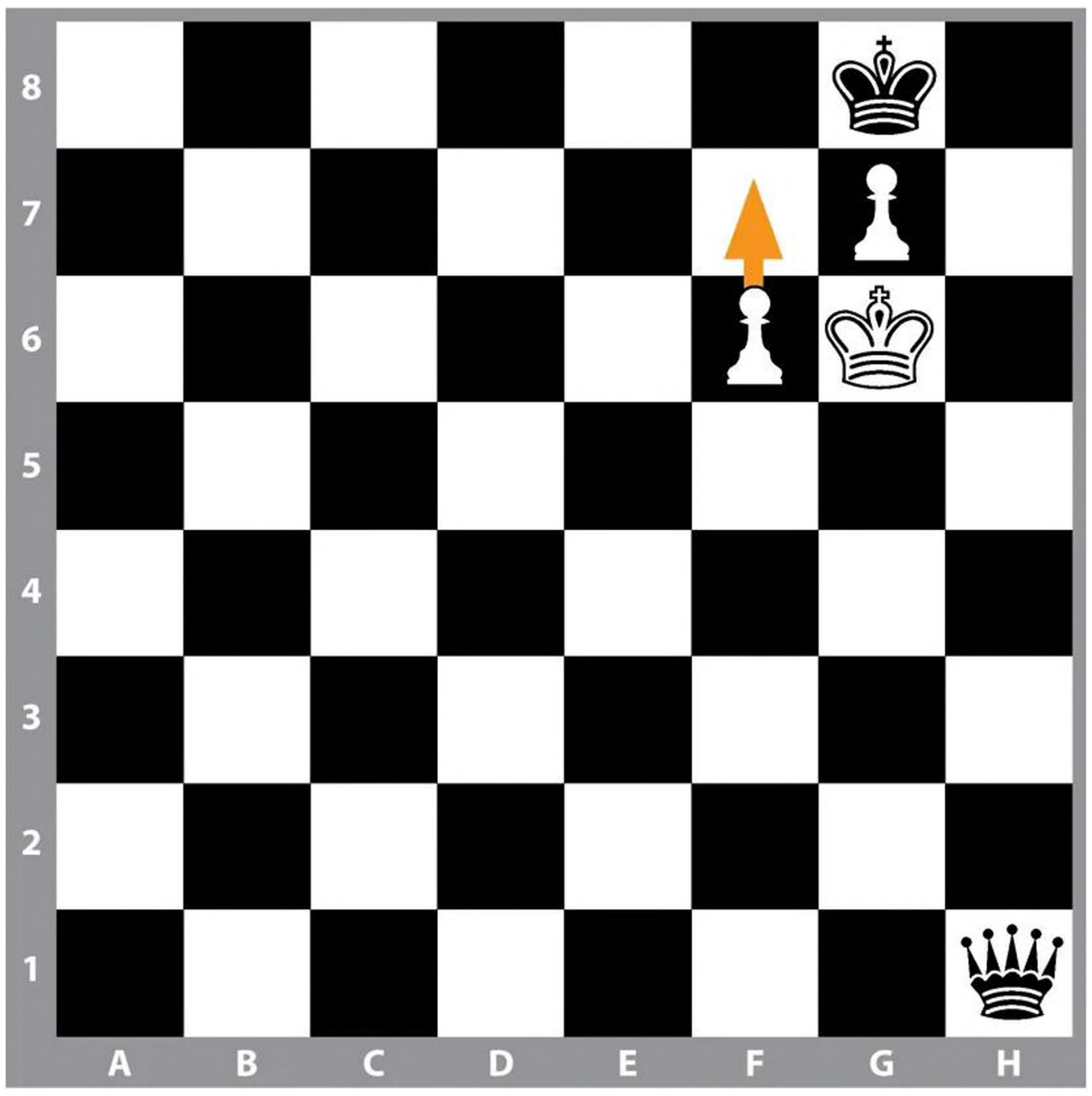
Checkmate patterns

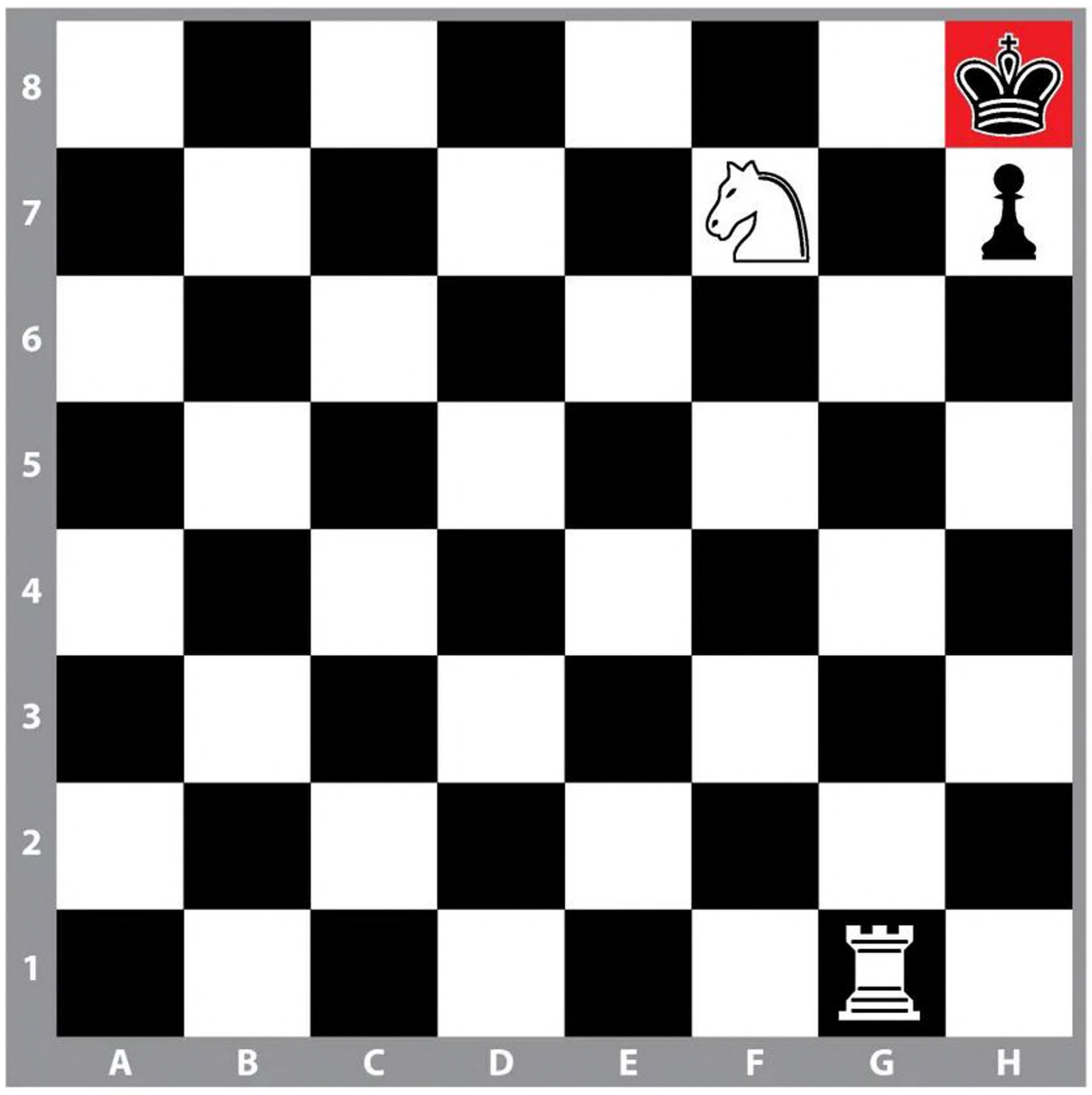
There are thousands of different checkmate patterns. A lot of them time they are variations of very common patterns which can be very simple and effective in their execution



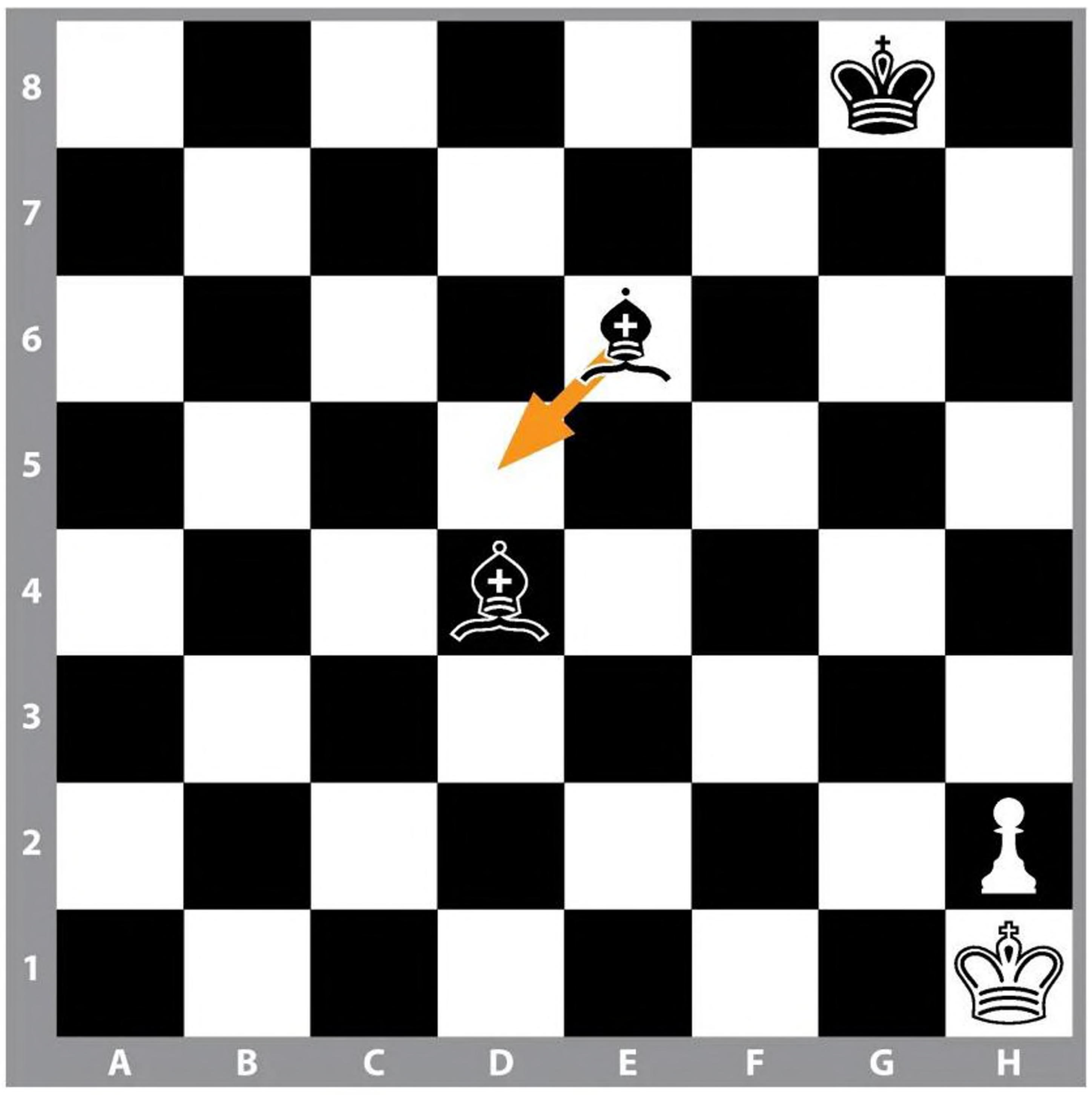
01: Queen and bishop This pattern uses the fact that the white king is cornered. Once the queen goes to g2, the king won't be able to escape nor take the queen.



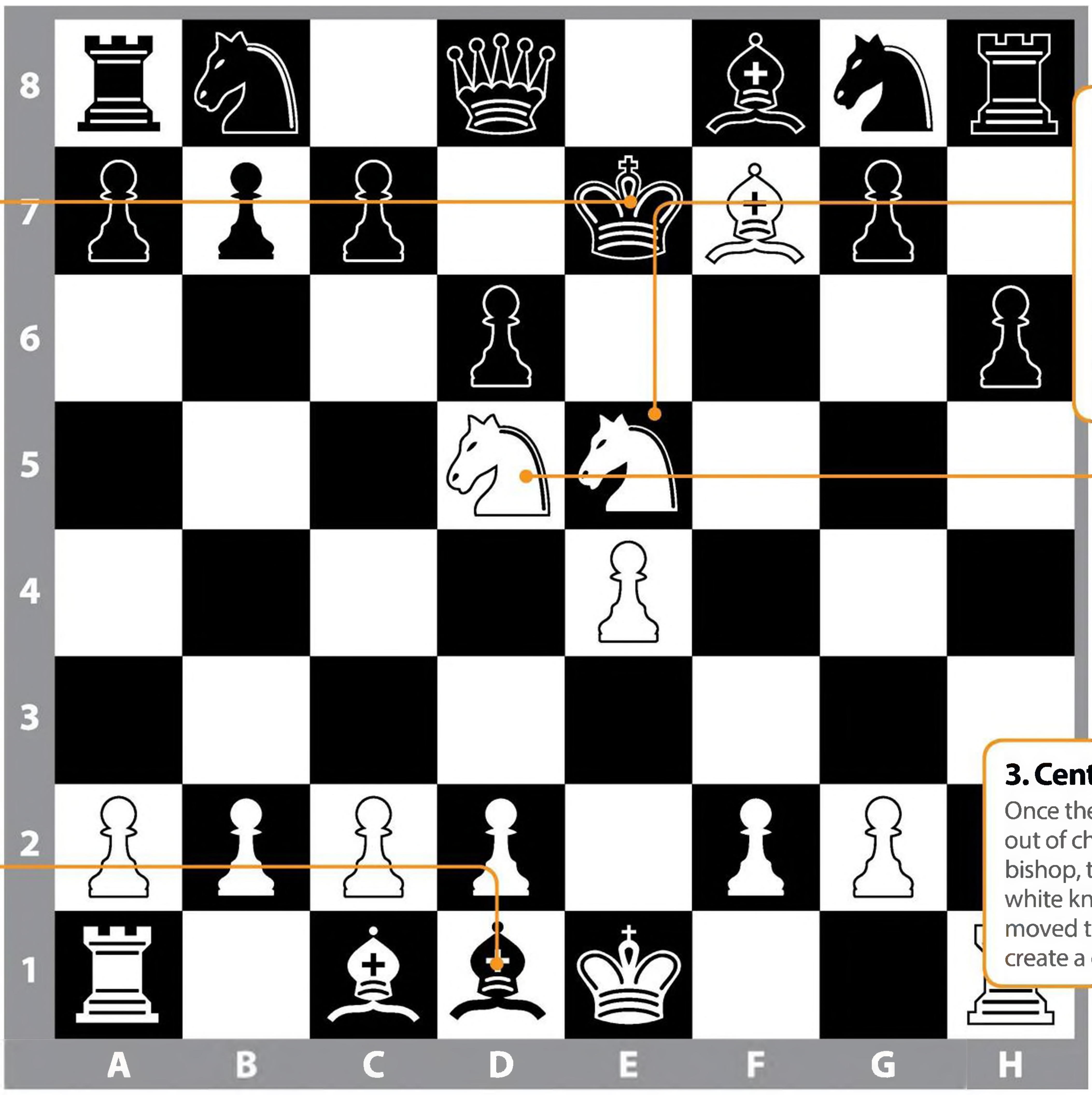
02: Mate with pawns Once the white pawn moves up to f7, the black king is rendered immobile. This pattern utilises the fact that kings can't sit next to each other.



03: Corner mate The black pawn has restricted the king from moving forward. When checked by the knight, it can only move to the g file, which can be covered by a rook or queen.



04: Mate with two bishops In this pattern the white pawn is again restricting the king. Once the black bishop moves into a check position, the king will be completely trapped.

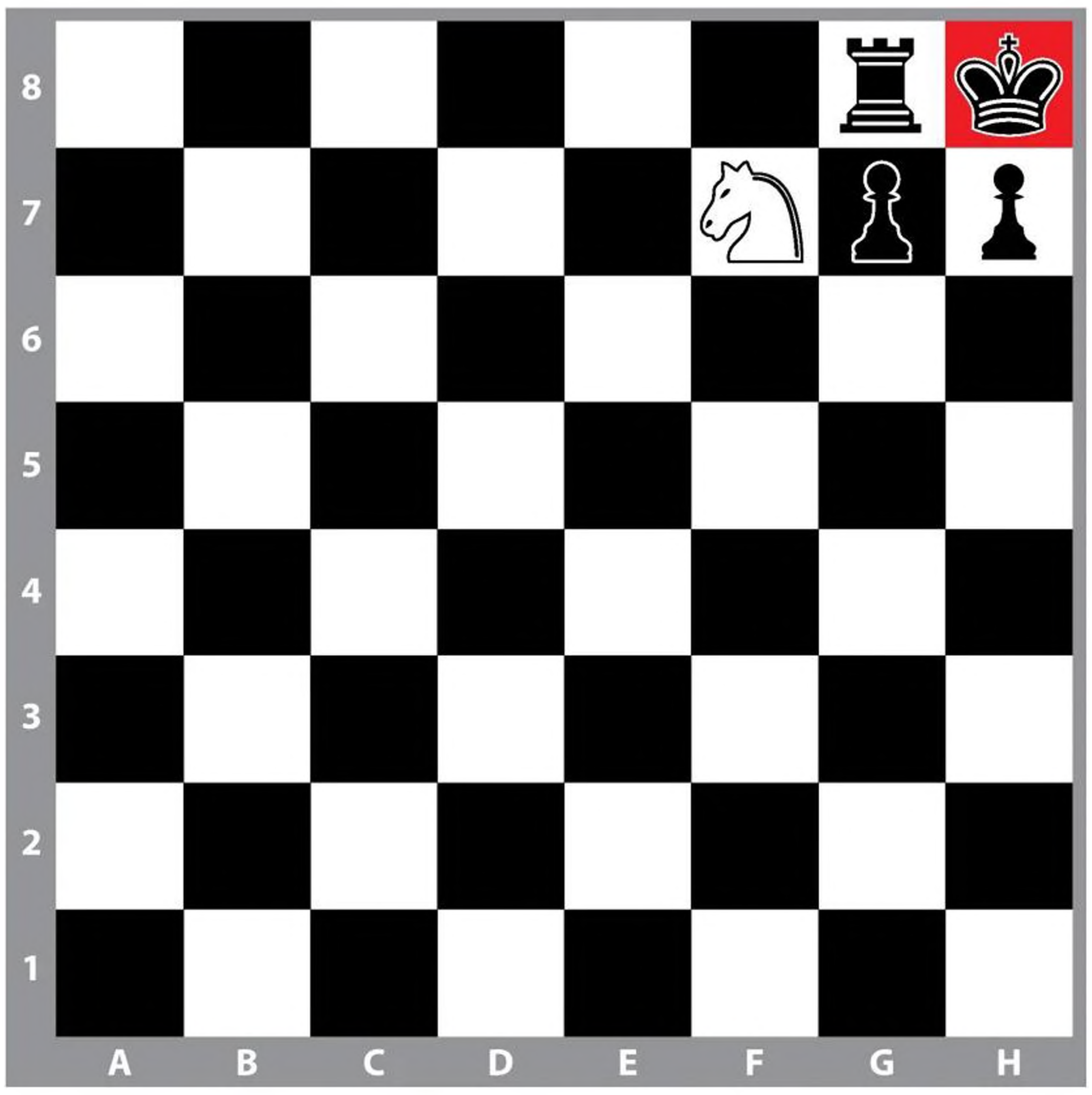


1. Using Légal's Mate
The Légal Trap (named after Sire de Légal) lets players get a checkmate early on in a game, by drawing away the opponent's bishop

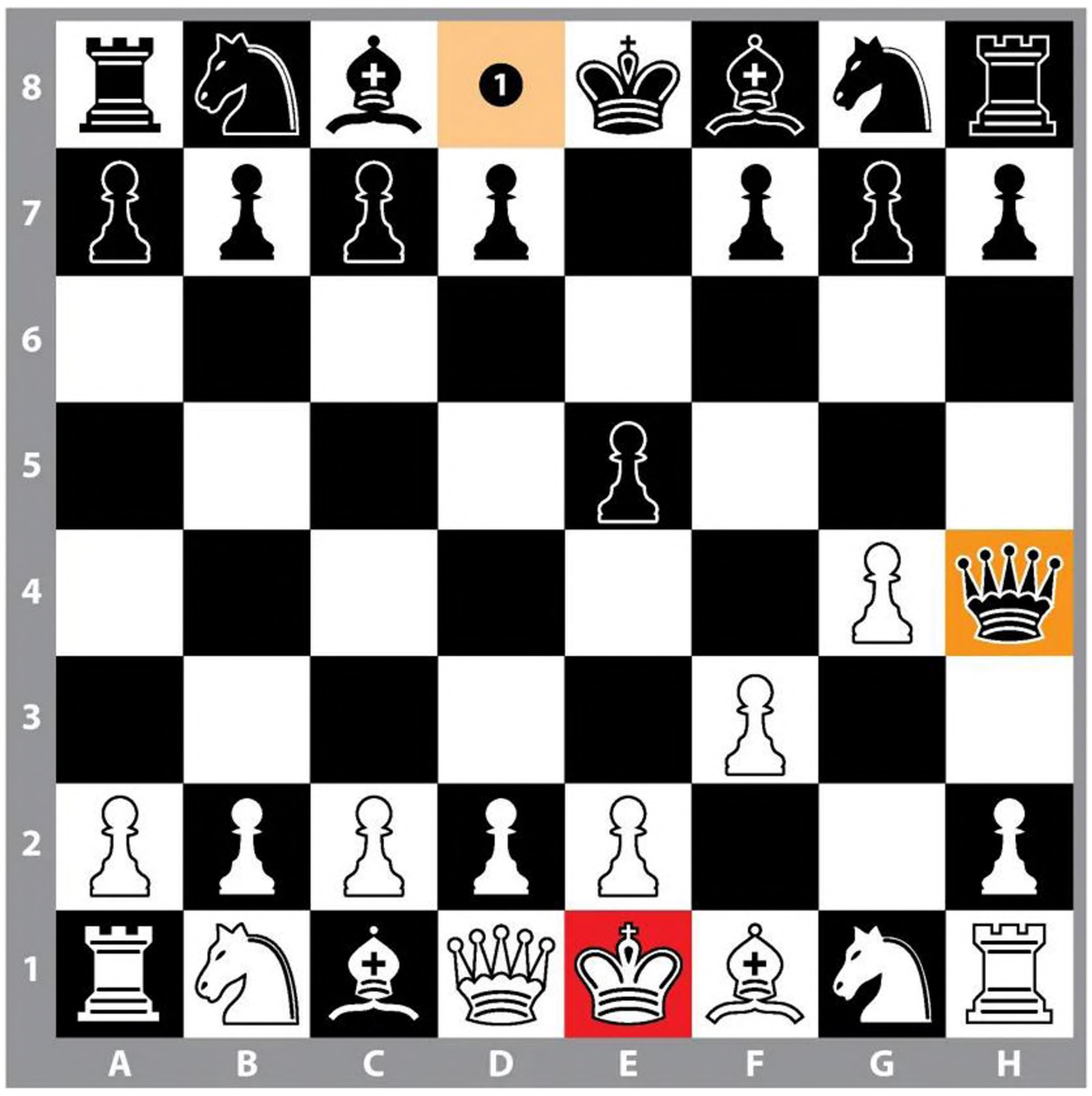
2. Bishops
By sacrificing your queen to the black bishop, the white bishop can entrench itself next to the black king, protected by the knight

3. Centre knight
Once the king has moved out of check from the bishop, the left-hand white knight can be moved to the centre to create a checkmate

Checkmate
The white knight which originally protected the bishop is now used to stop the black king from moving to the d7 position on the board



05: Smothered mate When a king is too well protected, an opponent can use a knight to place the king in check, leaving it with absolutely nowhere to go.



06: Two-move mate This is the quickest possible way to win. Here the queen(1) can move into a mate position in the second move if the king has been appropriately exposed.

The final move matters

Castling, skewers, batteries and other tactics make up this intriguing example of a hard-fought, and lucky, win

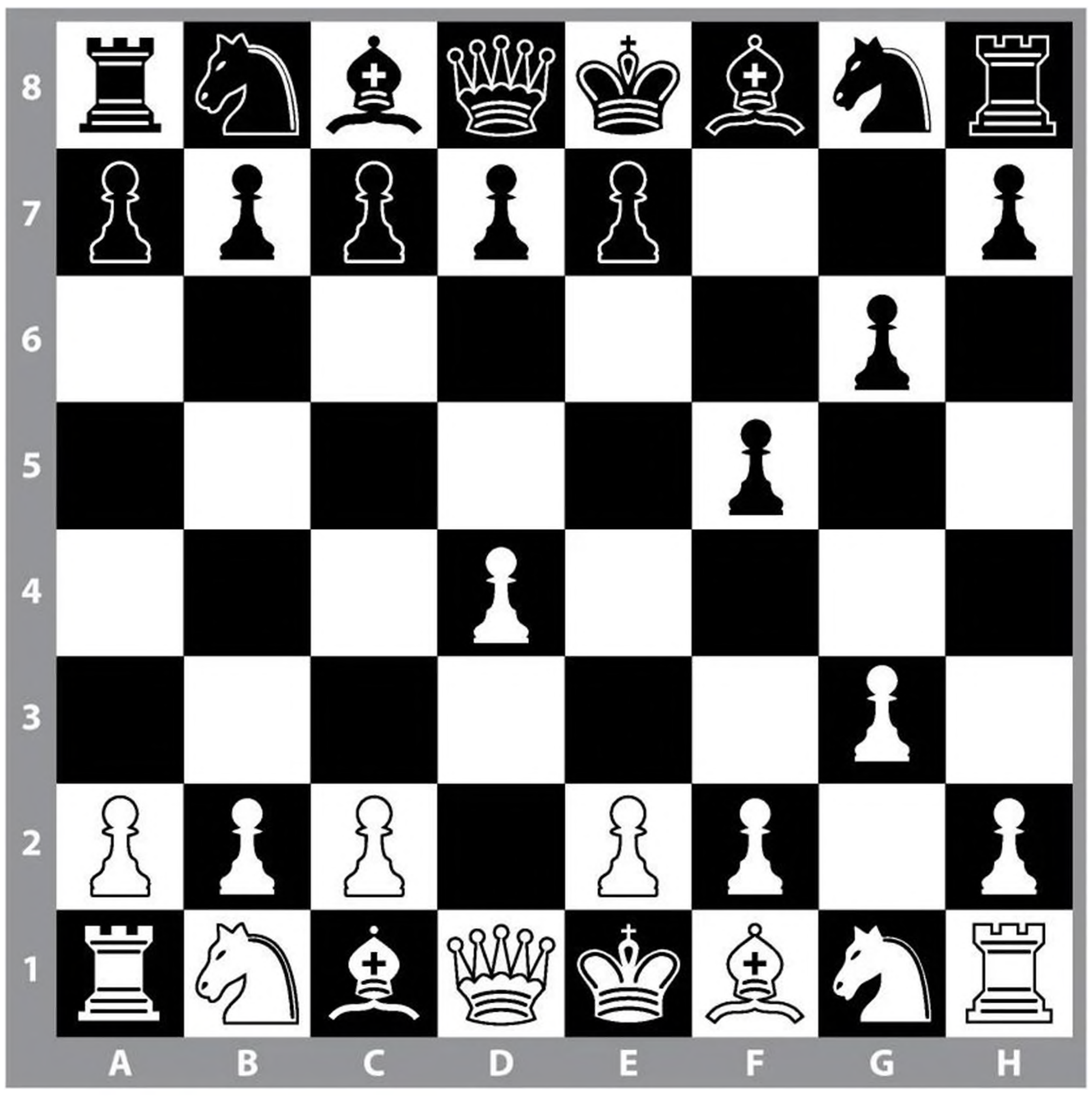
This example game highlights how the position you are in at any time can change very quickly. You can spend time building up an attack, take many pieces and then still miss a potential trap that your opponent has laid over many moves. It is easy to focus on your own position and to become wrapped up in the feeling of power when you have more pieces and a dominant position on the board, but you also need to focus on your opponent in equal measure to win the game. Chess is not about dominating the board or taking the most pieces. It is about finding a strategy that will beat your opponent and a win can come from very few pieces if the timing is right and the tactics are clever enough. You will see skewers and batteries used in this game, as well as good examples of effective castling and many other moves that are also covered in this book. The level of this game is fairly advanced, but don't let that put you off because it is instructional and highlights how you need to think for yourself just as much as learning what moves to play in a particular situation. The more you play, the more familiar this game will feel to you and that is when you know you are becoming a worthy chess opponent for most players. It's time to see who wins this game.

> "Chess is not about dominating the board or taking the most pieces"

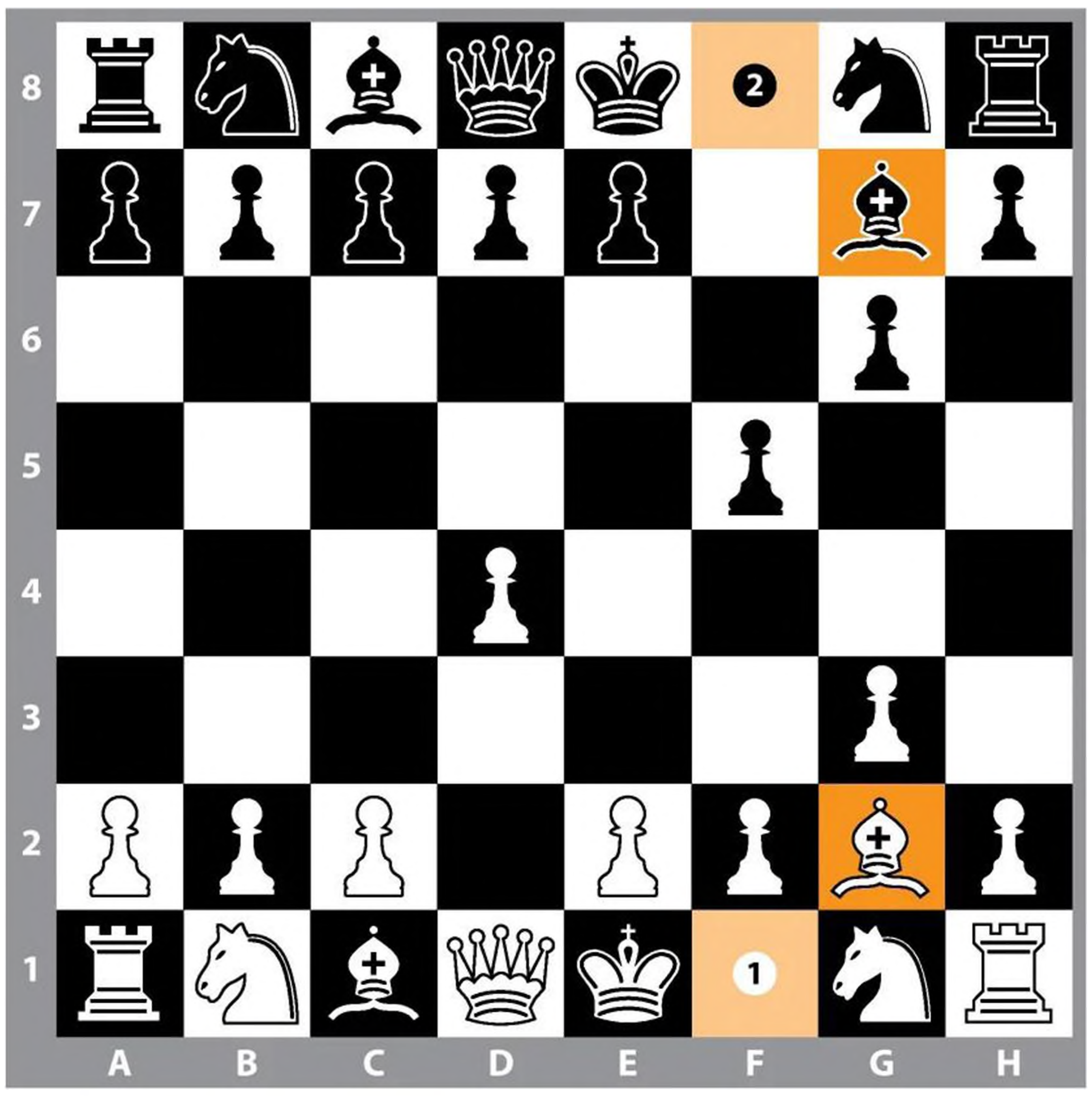
Top tip

Beware of traps

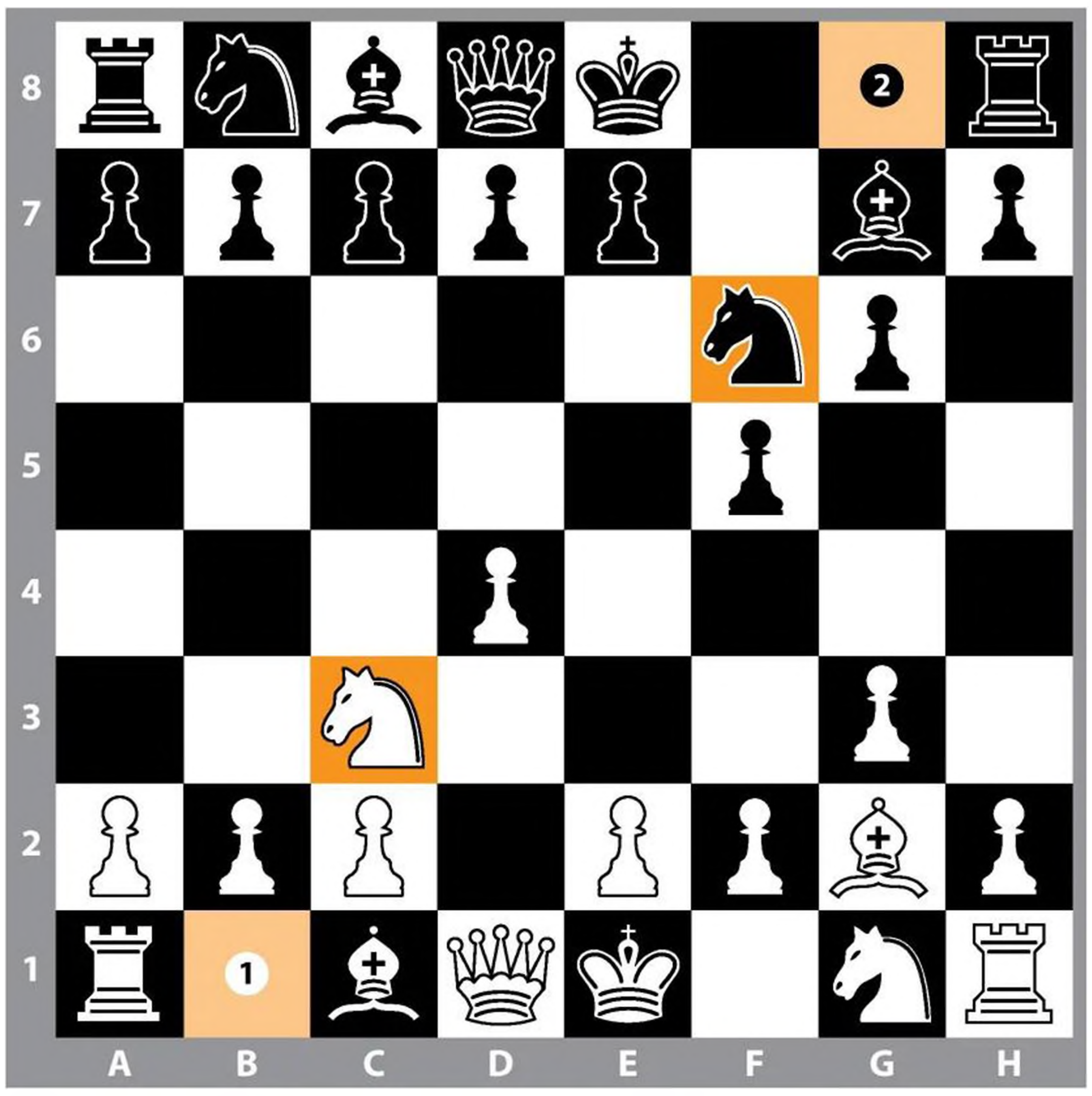
The main lesson to take from this game is that if your opponent is giving away too many high-value pieces, there may be a trap at the end of it. Most players will try to keep rooks and queens in play.



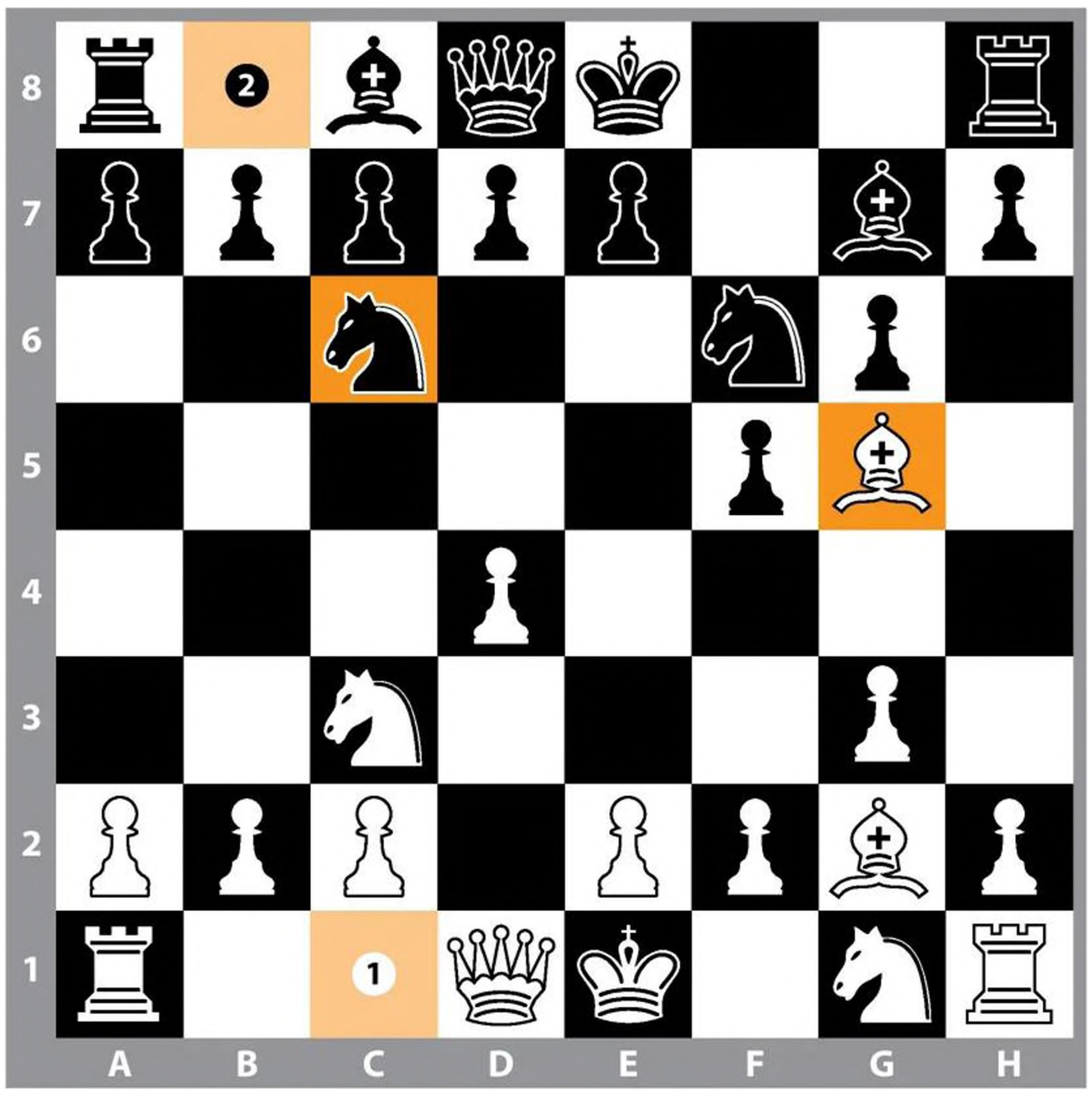
01: The opening Black and white have made two moves each, with both sides offering an attacking and quite open position early on. This position leaves both with something to think about because there are immediate opportunities to bring the black bishop or the white queen into play. White could move the bishop to g5 to force a very early attack on black's queen.



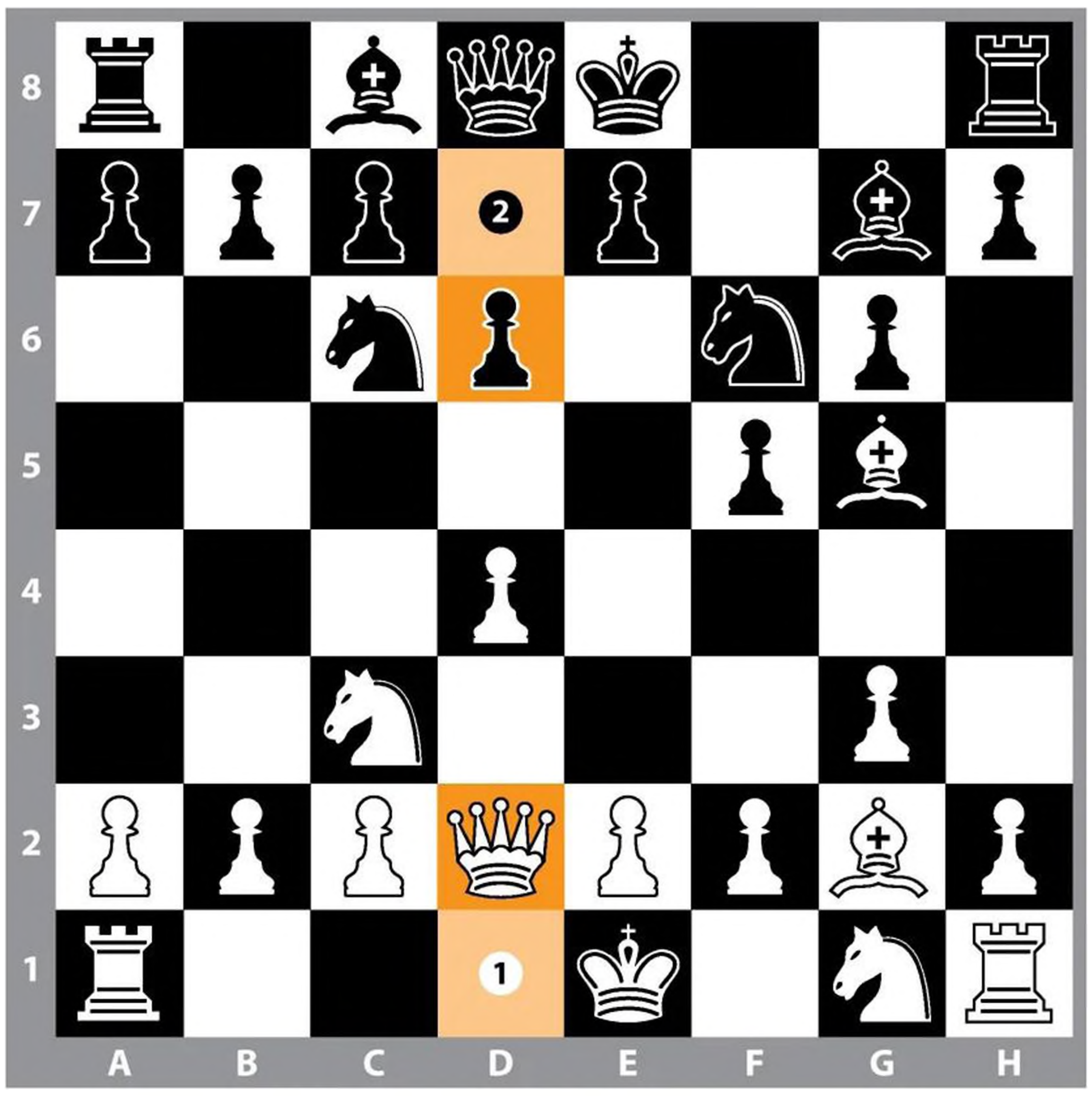
02: Think ahead White has moved the king's bishop(1) in an unsurprising move, but it does give potential for a castling in the relatively near future. Black(2) does the same kingside and so both have a fairly high-value piece in an unconfined position. Note that white's queen is also free to move vertically, but black's has more protection at this particular stage of the game.



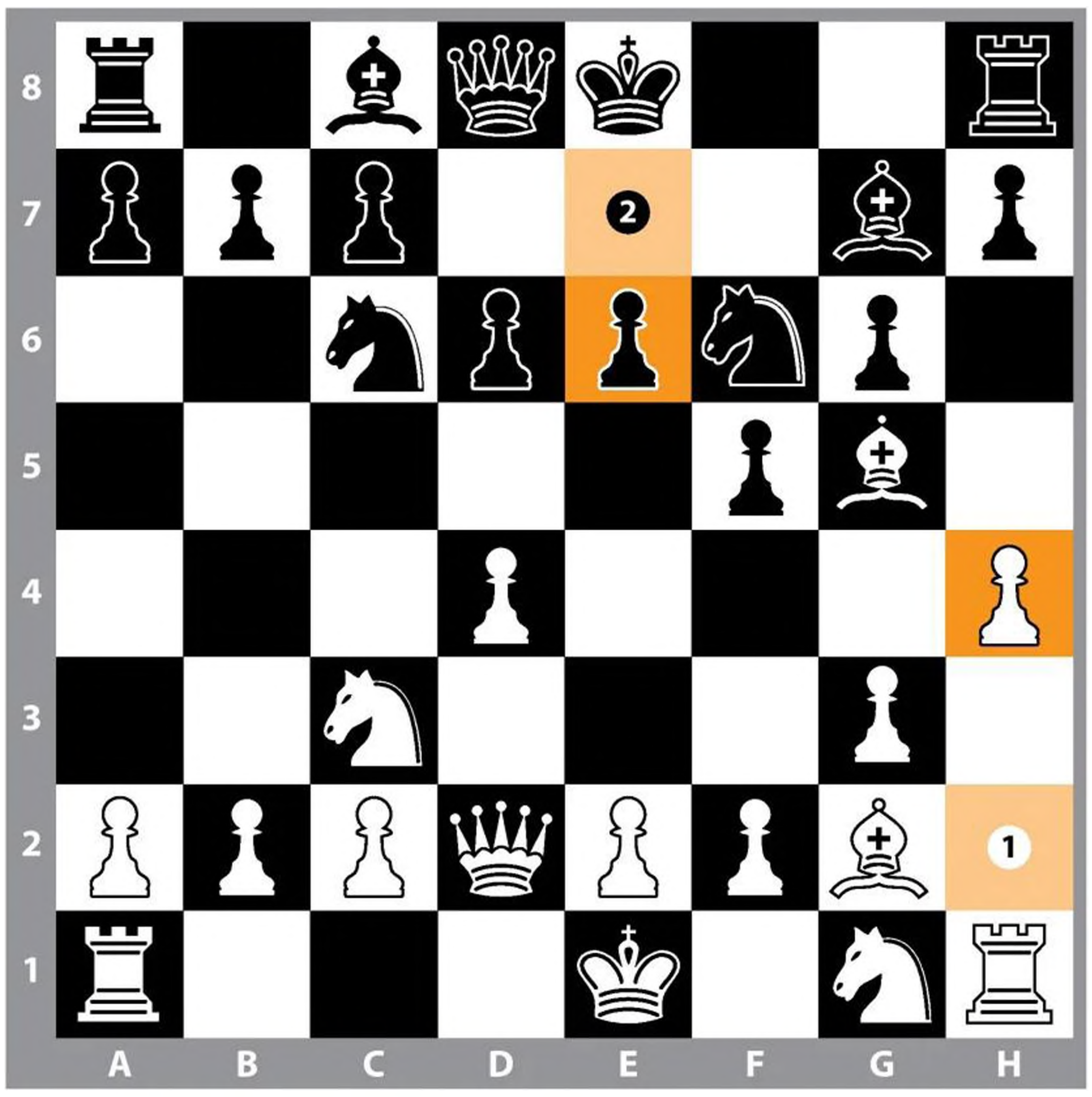
03: It's getting interesting White moves the knight⁽¹⁾ to c3, which may imply a desire to move the pawn on e2 to e4. Black responds with knight⁽²⁾ to f6. There is then a possibility of moving the black knight to e4, which would create a fork against white's knight and two other pawns if none of these pieces is moved next. However, the next move is white's.



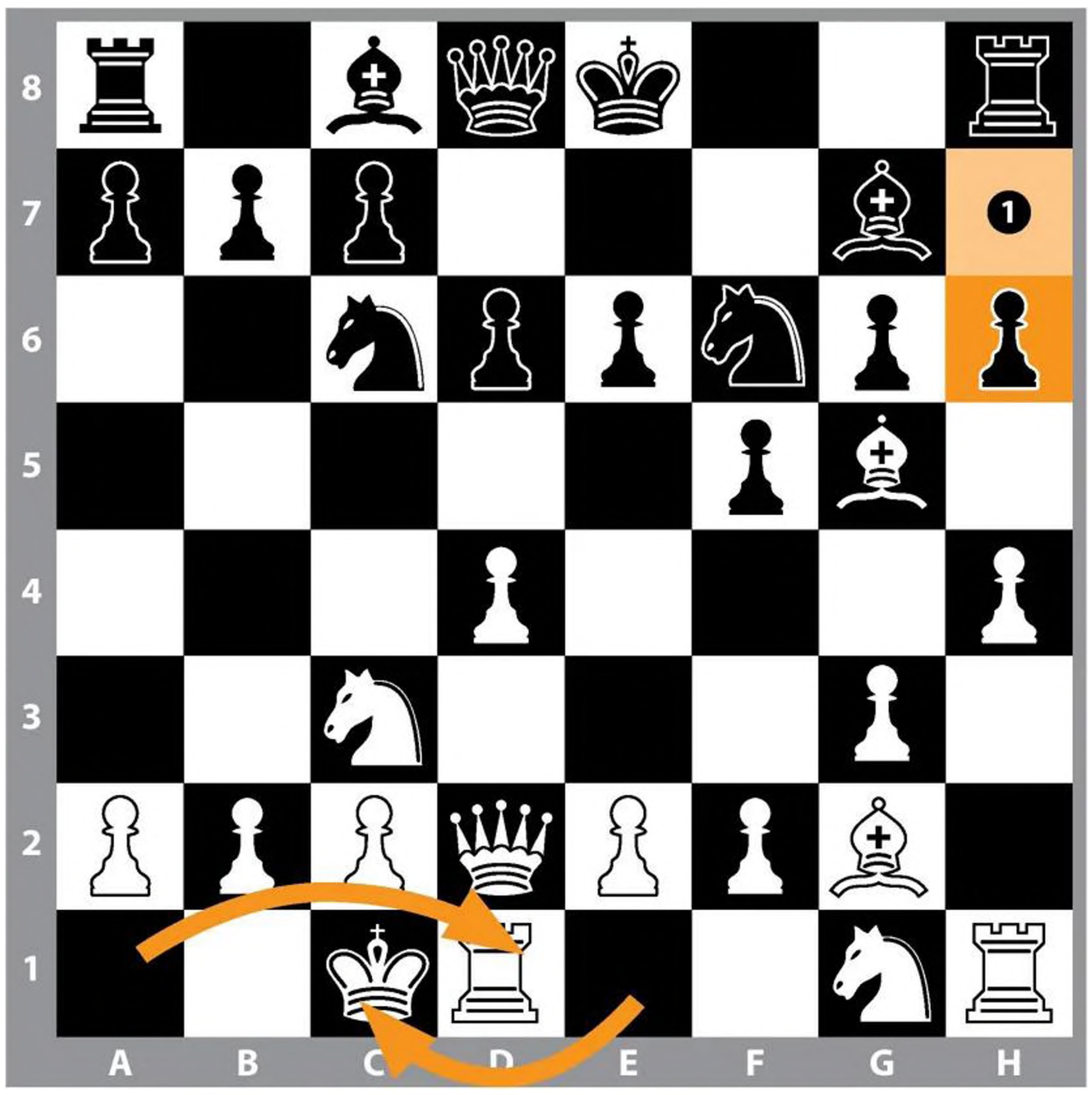
04: A skewer White moves the bishop⁽¹⁾ to g5 and immediately creates a skewer against the knight and the pawn. It is a bold move and highlights a possible intention to attack early on. Black moves its knight⁽²⁾ to c6 to then potentially move it to e5 and then f7 to attack the bishop on g5. In this situation, you should now sit back and analyse all that is occurring.



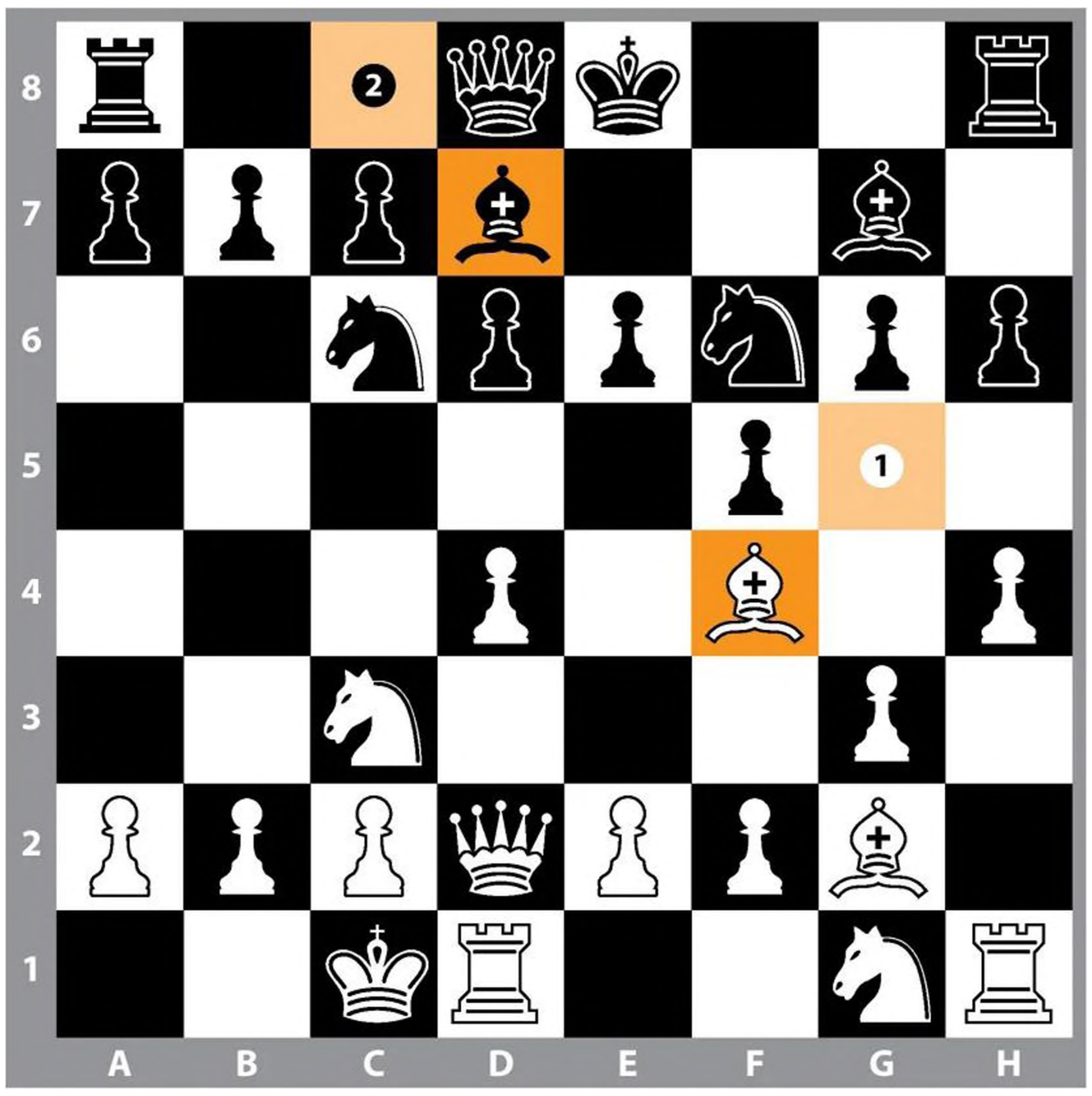
05: Freeing the queens White's next move is to bring the queen⁽¹⁾ out slightly to d2, which potentially gives it more flexibility. It is also protecting the bishop on g5 and so black opts to move the pawn⁽²⁾ in front of its queen to d6 to follow a similar path. Its queen now has a limited amount of mobility, but this represents a starting position to bring it forward quickly.



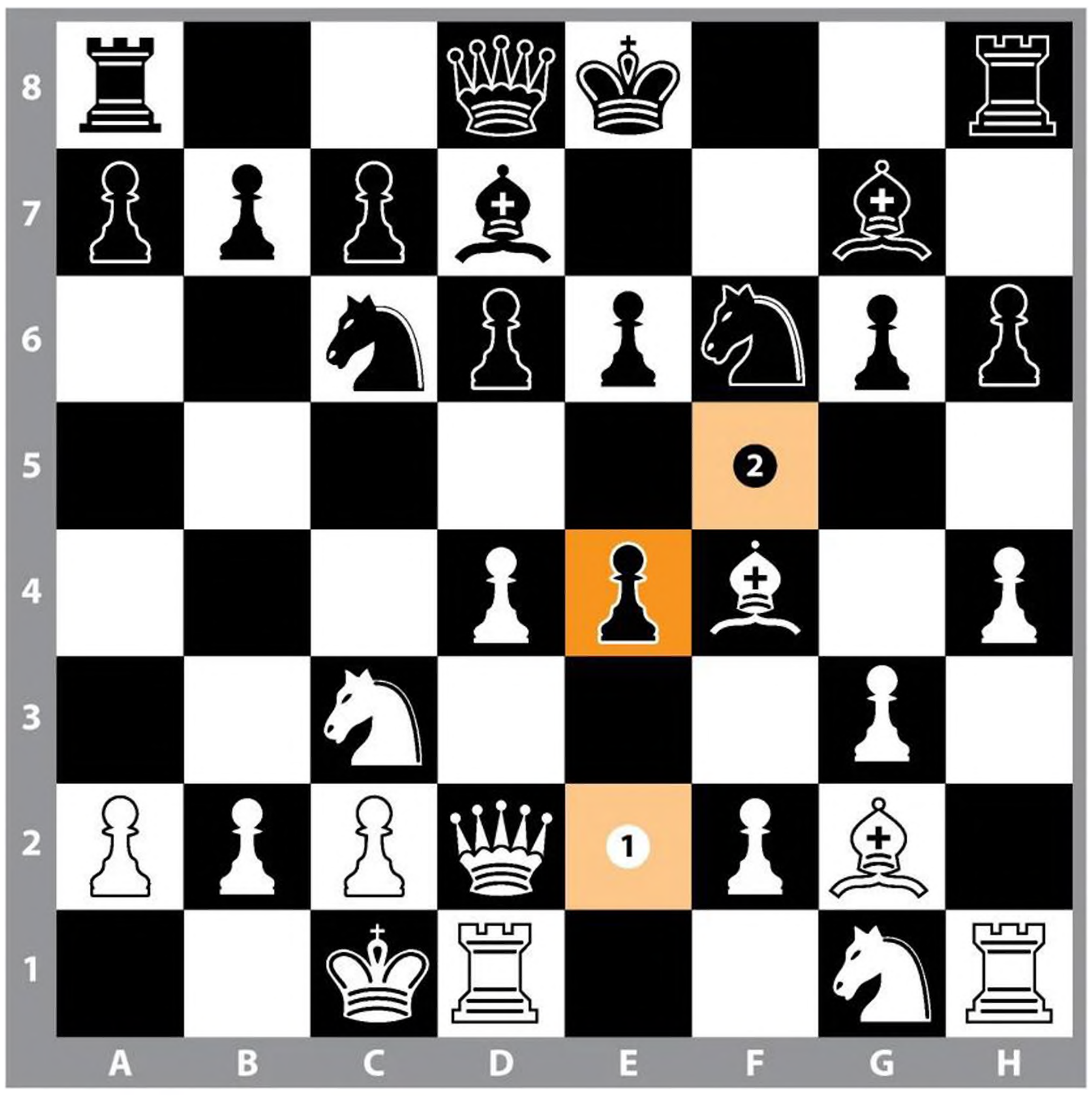
06: Simple pawn moves White now moves its pawn⁽¹⁾ to h4, which offers some protection to the bishop while freeing up the rook. Black⁽²⁾ could move to e5 to attack the white pawn on d4, but to do so could mean the piece being taken without any recourse. It also potentially leaves open a series of moves where the c6 knight could be taken by white's g2 bishop.



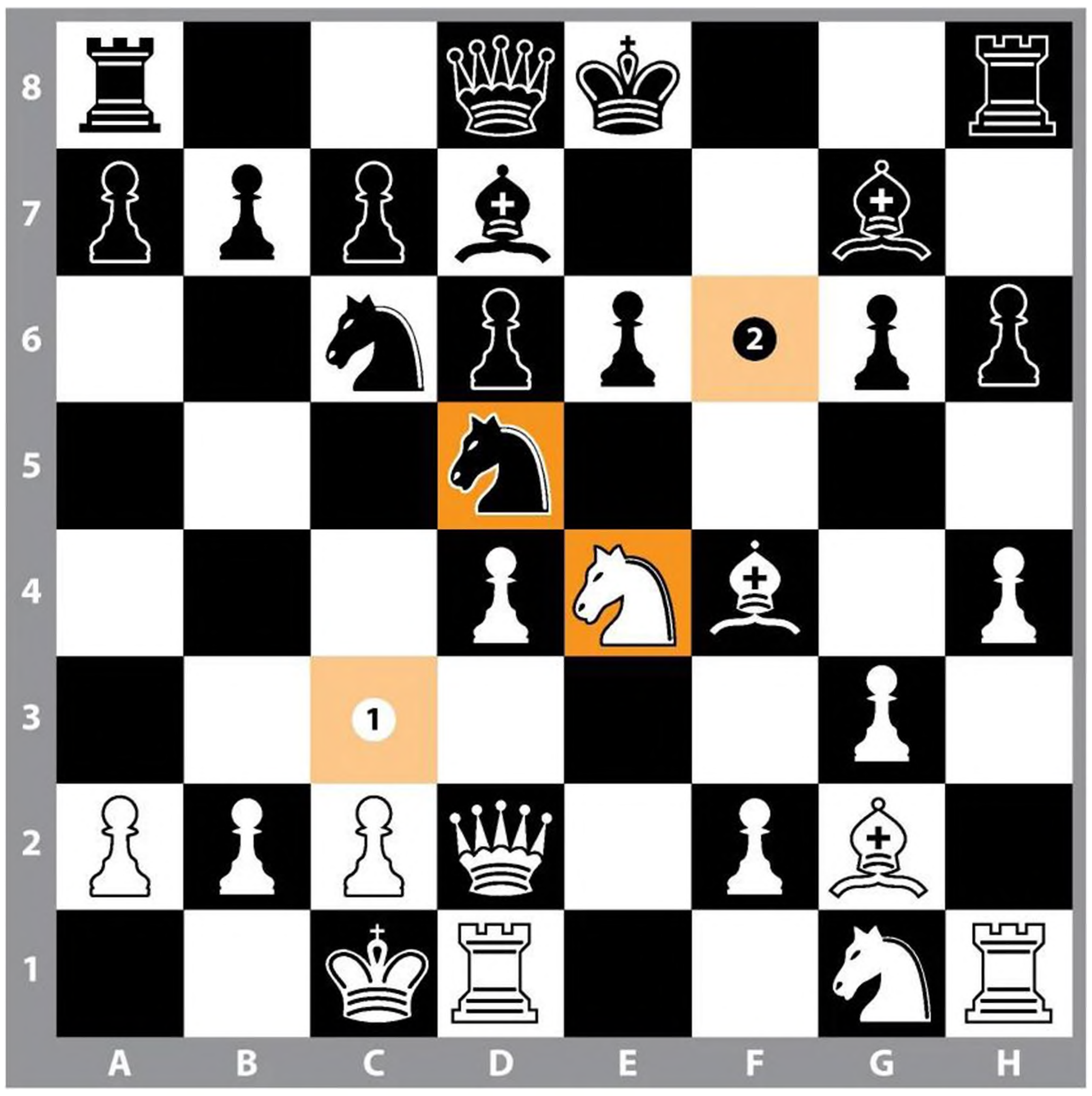
07: A castling manoeuvre White now castles to offer some protection for its king. There is a steady line of protection and free squares allowing this move to take place. Black, on the other hand, now decides to attack white's bishop by moving its pawn(1) to h6. This does give white's bishop an obvious fork, but you have to consider if a fork is always worth having.



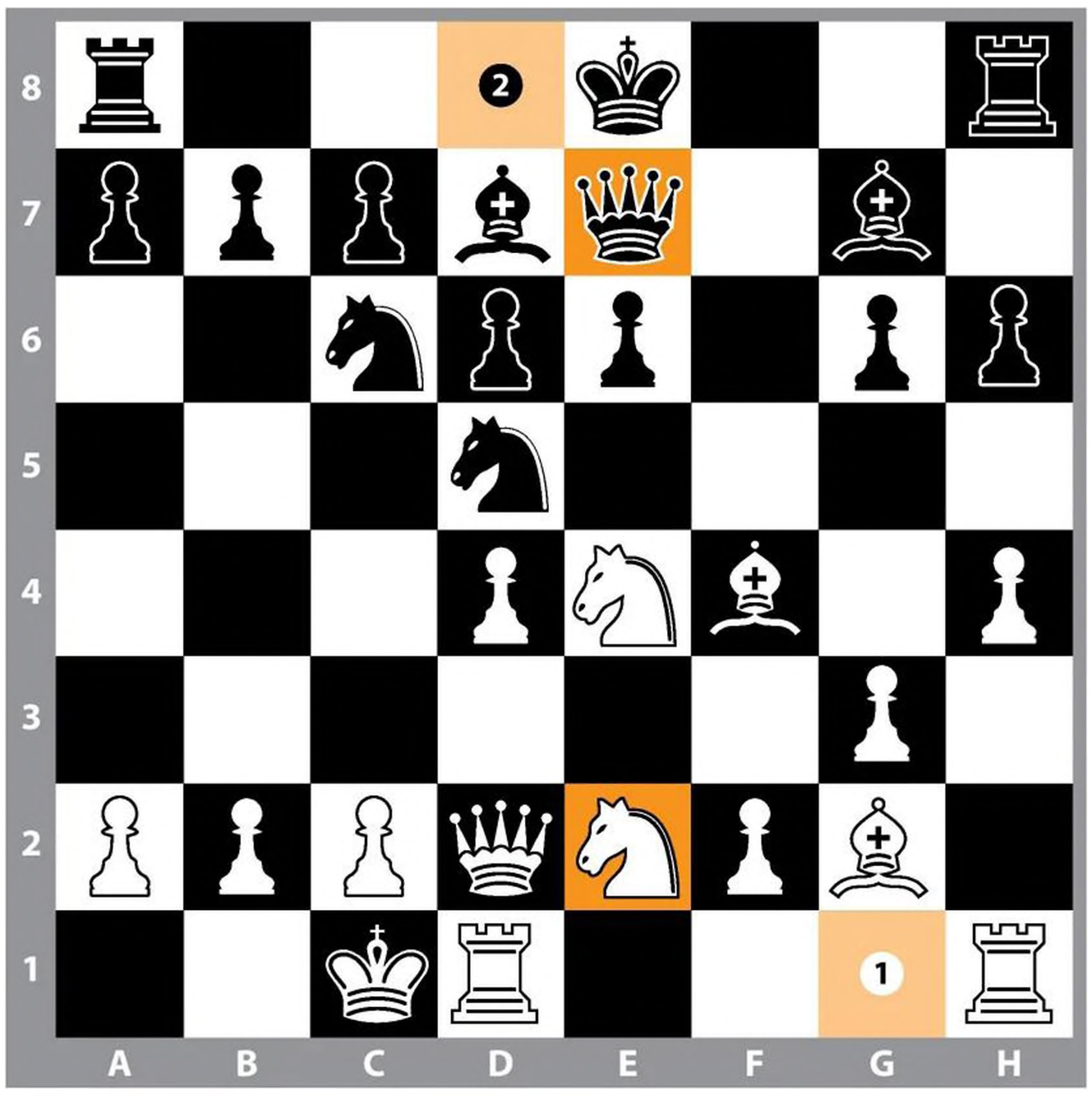
08: Time to retreat White retreats the bishop(1) to f4, but still threatens two of black's pawns. White could have taken black's knight, but there'd be little advantage gained as black could then take it back and move to a slightly more advanced position than before. Black responds by moving its bishop(2) in front of the queen to cover the knight, pawn and queen.



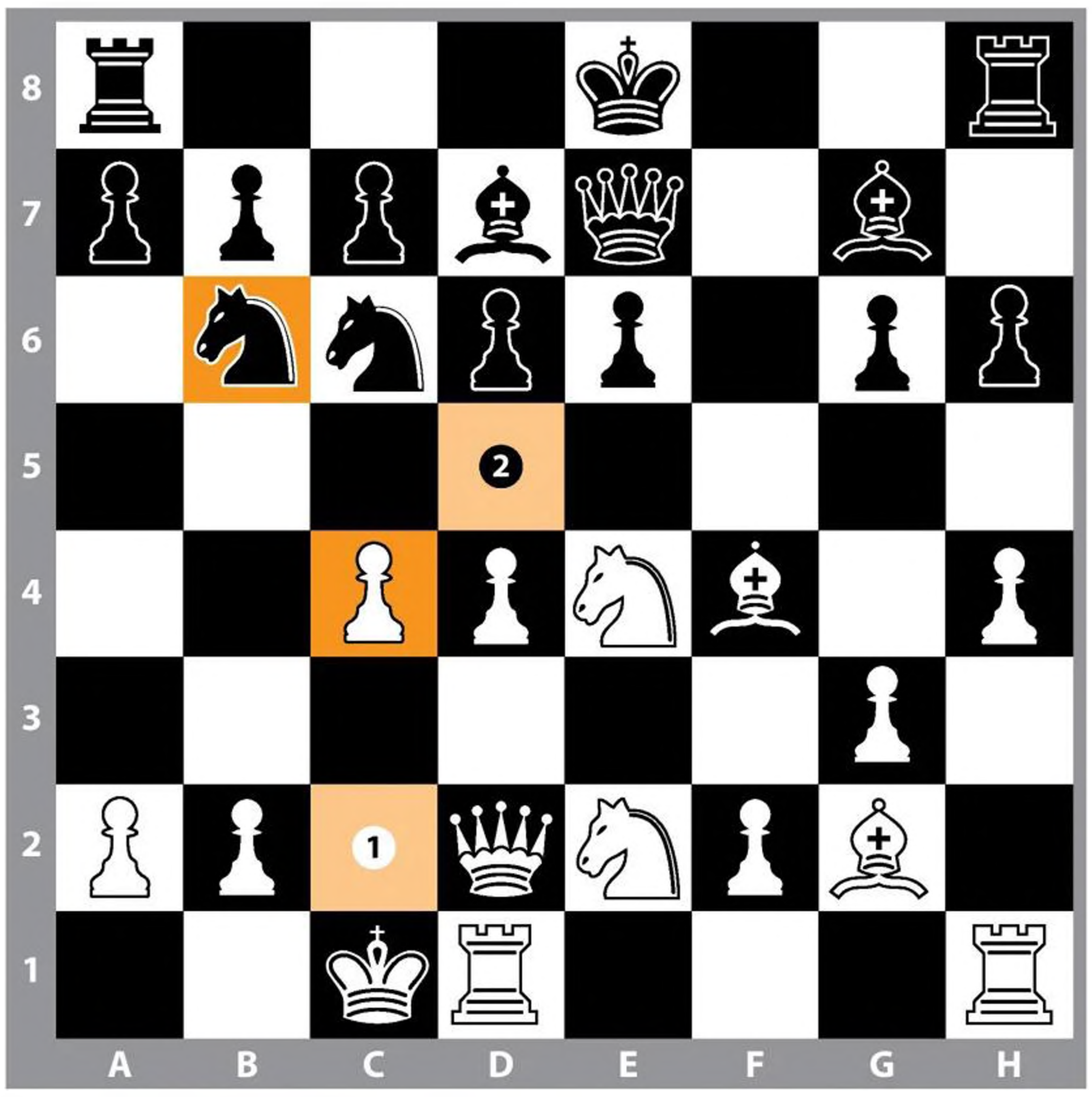
09: A lost pawn White moves its pawn(1) to e4, which puts it under attack from a number of pieces, but black chooses to take it using its pawn(2) on f5. The black pawn is now under attack from the white knight, but also protected by its own knight. As you can see, the pieces are starting to move to the centre, so it's another opportunity to analyse the position.



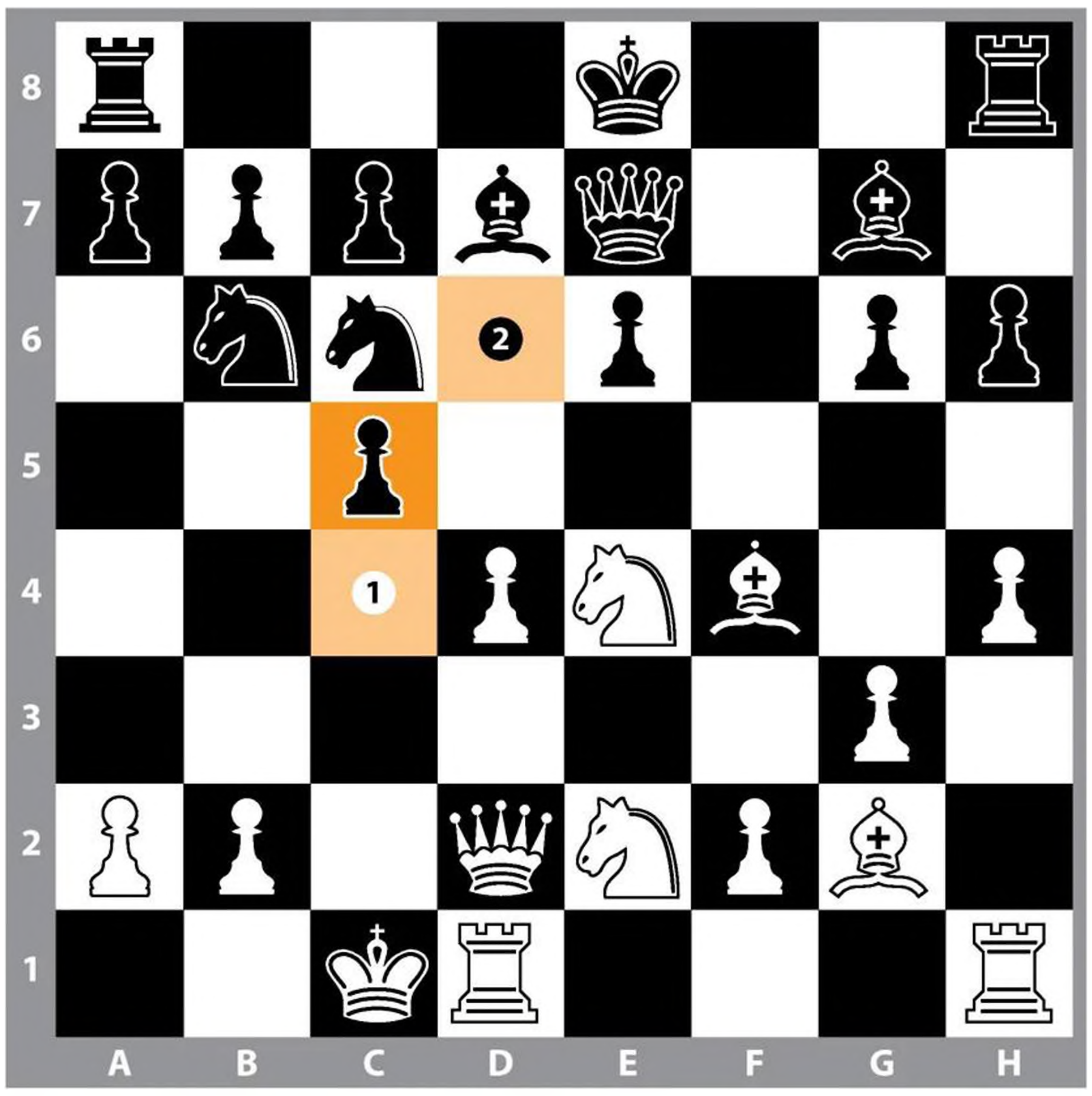
10: Avoid the obvious White decides to take the pawn on e4 with its knight(1), which leaves it vulnerable to the black knight on f6. The obvious move is to take the white knight, but white could then take it with its bishop and attack the other black knight at the same time without fear of being taken itself. Black opts to move the knight(2) to d5, to attack the bishop.



11: Adding protection White moves knight(1) to e2 which, as you can see, offers protection to the d4 pawn and more importantly the bishop on f4. Black reconsider its next move because simply taking the bishop on f4 with the knight would put white in a strong position and the black knight would be lost immediately anyway. Protection is always key(2).



12: Happy to retreat White moves its pawn(1) to c4, which means that it could take black's knight, which is of course a more valuable piece. Black decides to retreat the knight(2) to b6, which means that the pawn is still under attack from it. Never be afraid to retreat if there is no upside to losing a piece. Chess is not about attacking or defending. It is about winning.

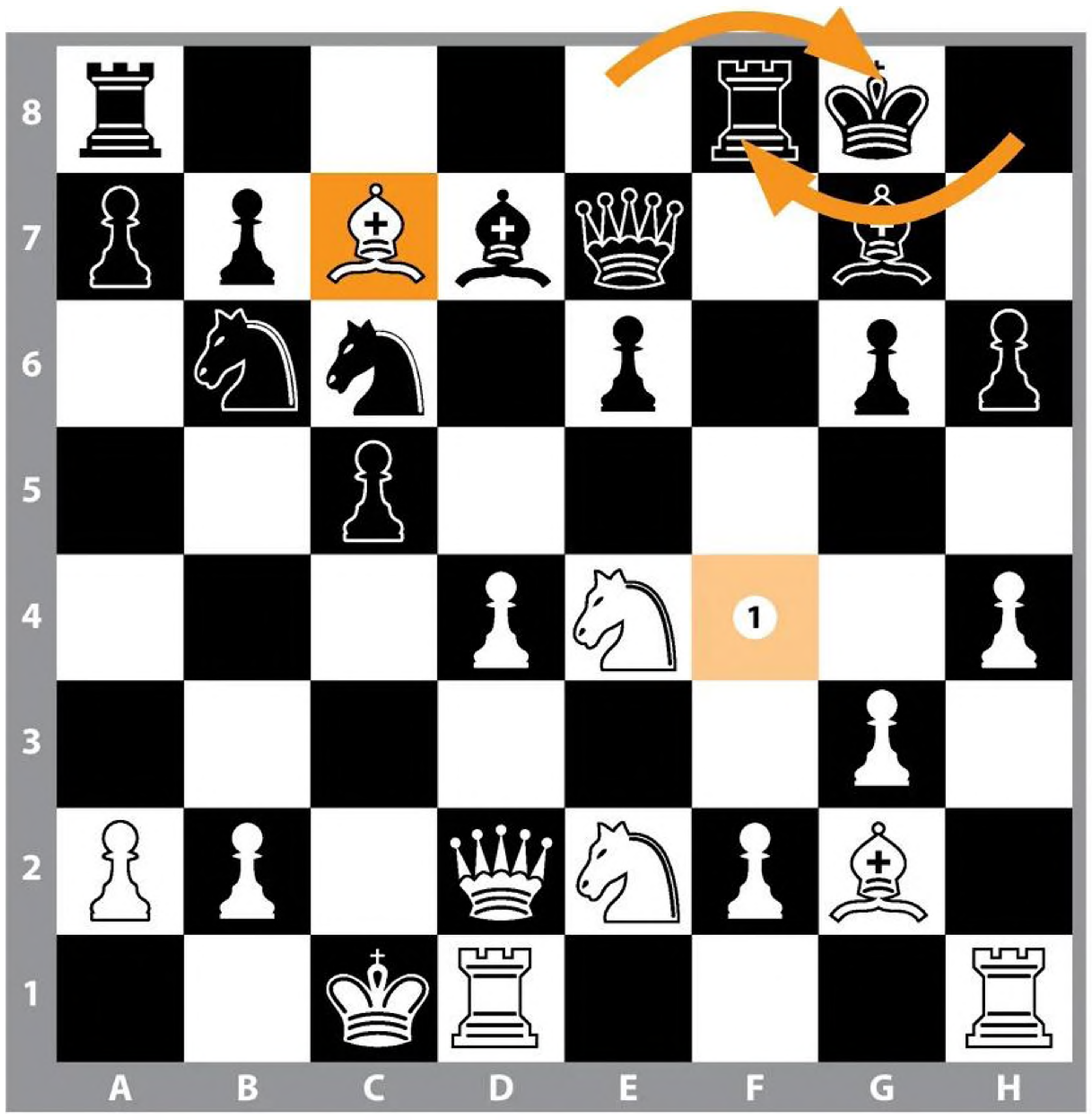


13: A clever sacrifice White puts itself under attack by moving the pawn(1) to c5, but it is creating a fork and attacking black's knight and pawn simultaneously. Keep an eye on the white bishop at f4 too as, if black moves the d pawn out of the way, this can potentially take the black pawn on c7 without fear of immediate capture. Black(2) takes the white pawn on c5 anyway.

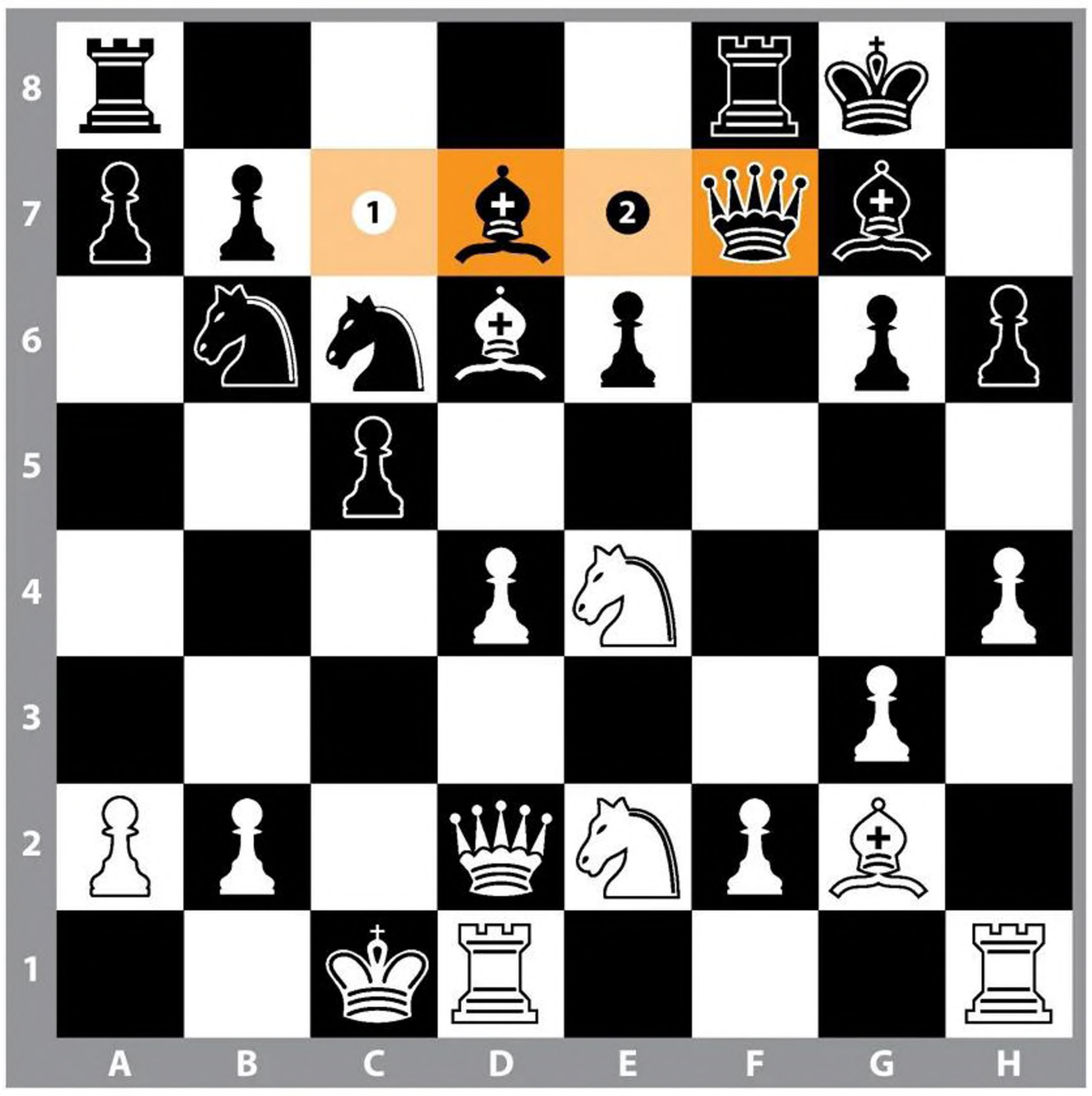
Who is winning?

An intriguing position

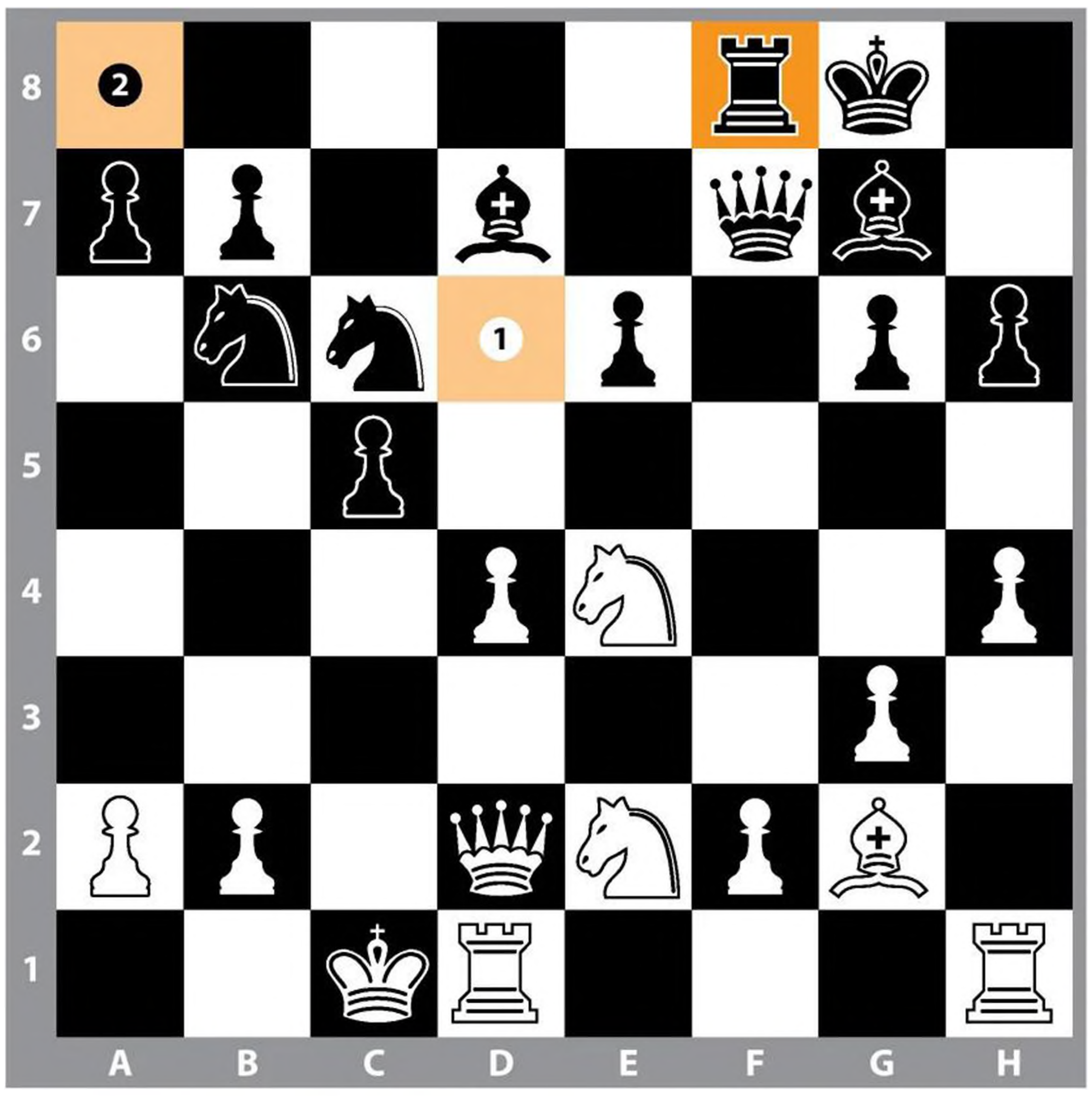
It is far from easy to ever decide who is winning a game halfway through, but there are some indications here that white is slightly ahead. The overall position on the board puts white's bishop, knight and two pawns further advanced against black's singular pawn. Both queens are fairly well protected, but the first danger comes from the white bishop, which could advance into a very strong position quickly. Any chess game is up in the air until the final move and one mistake in a position like this could make all of the difference. The smart money would be on white.



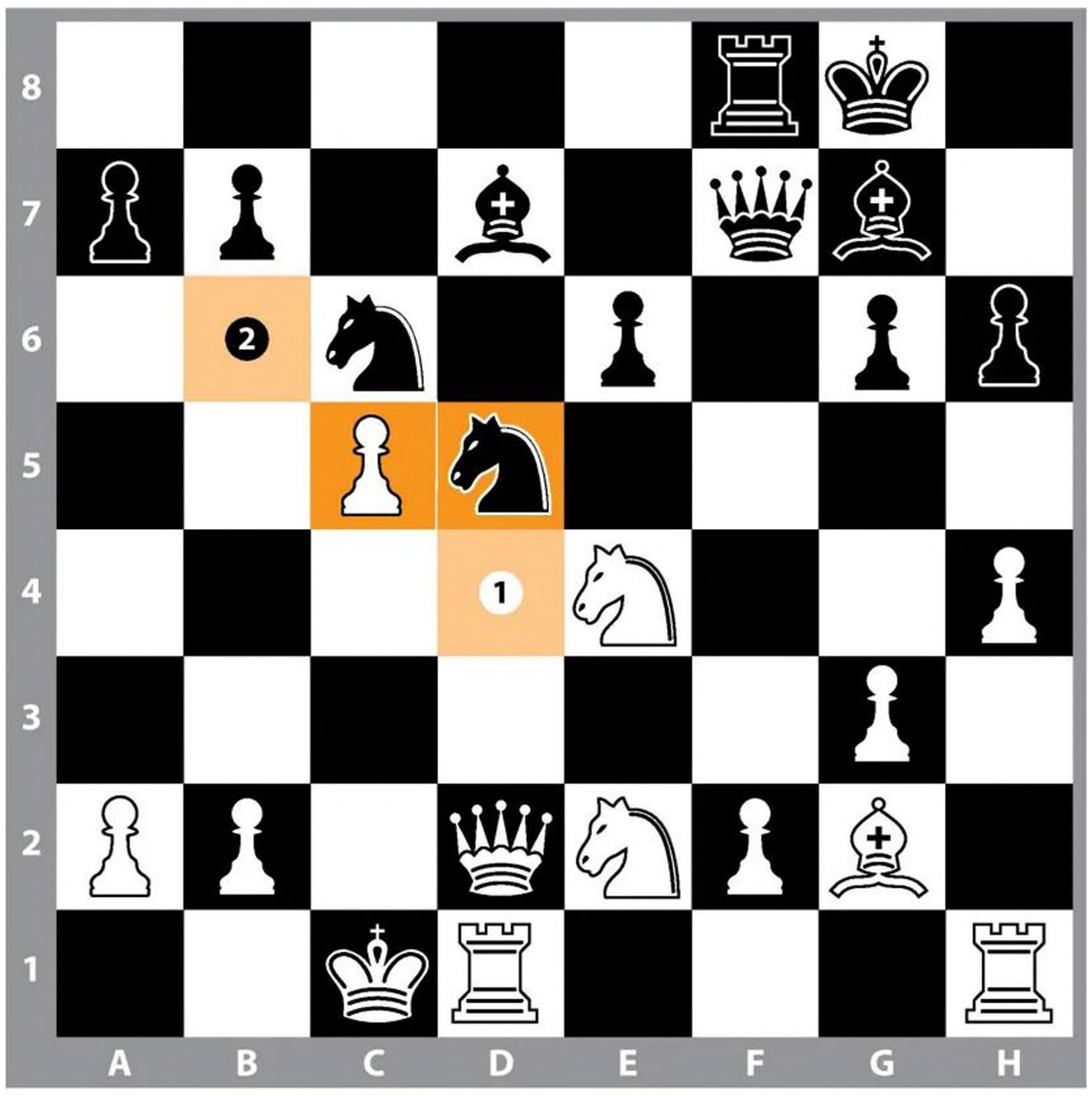
14: The could be bad White(1) makes the obvious move and takes the c7 pawn. It does not enable it to take another piece straight away, but the position is advanced and something to build on. Black retreats again and castles to protect the king. This part of the game could be considered to be lost by black, but there's always the chance to change things if you think big.



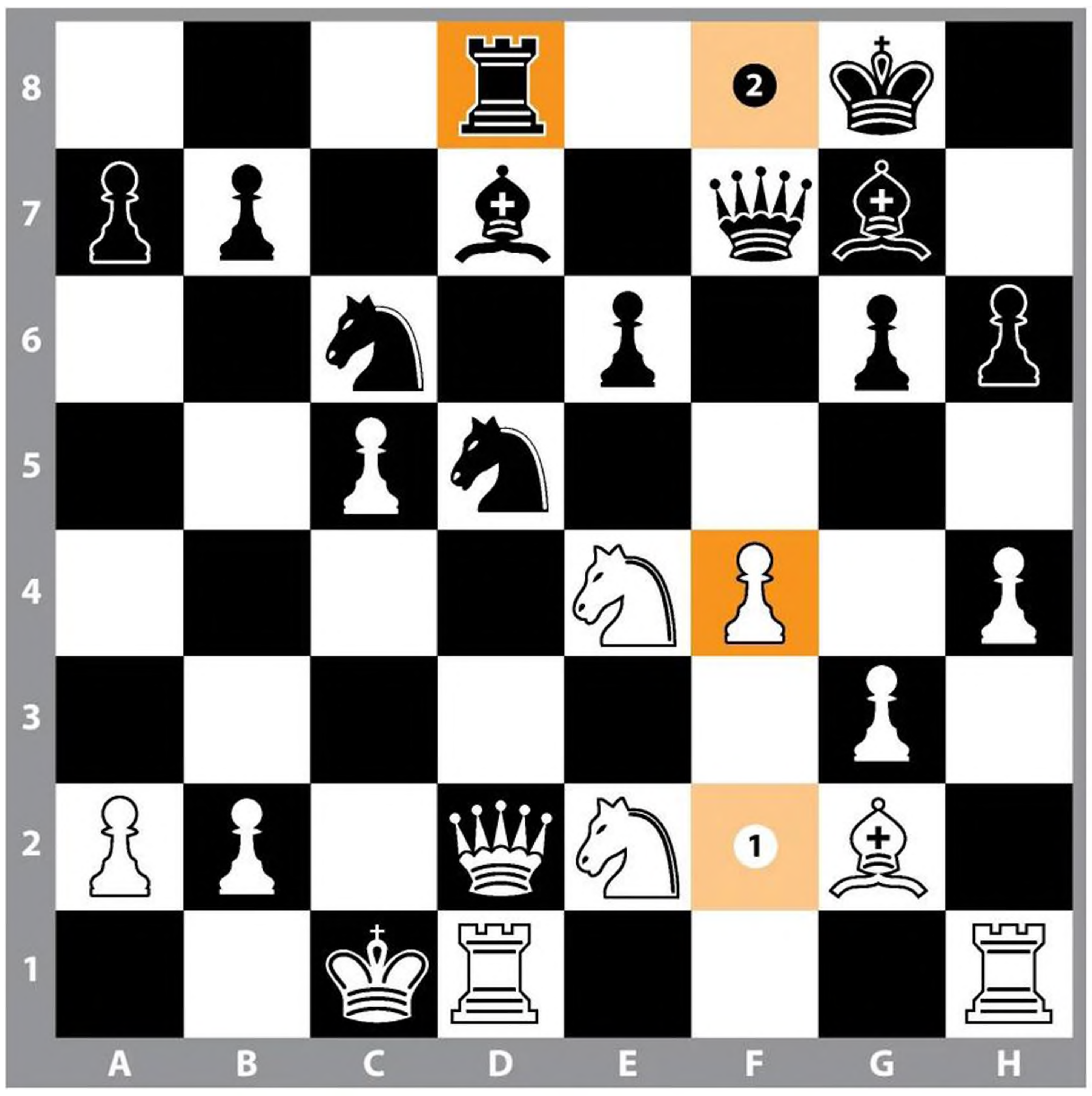
15: A small hop White moves the bishop(1) to d6 which creates an immediate skewer on black's queen on e7 and the rook on f8. There is no piece that can attack the bishop, so black makes what looks like another obvious move by shifting the queen(2) to f7 to avoid capture. The rook is now under direct threat from the bishop and white's position is again looking strong.



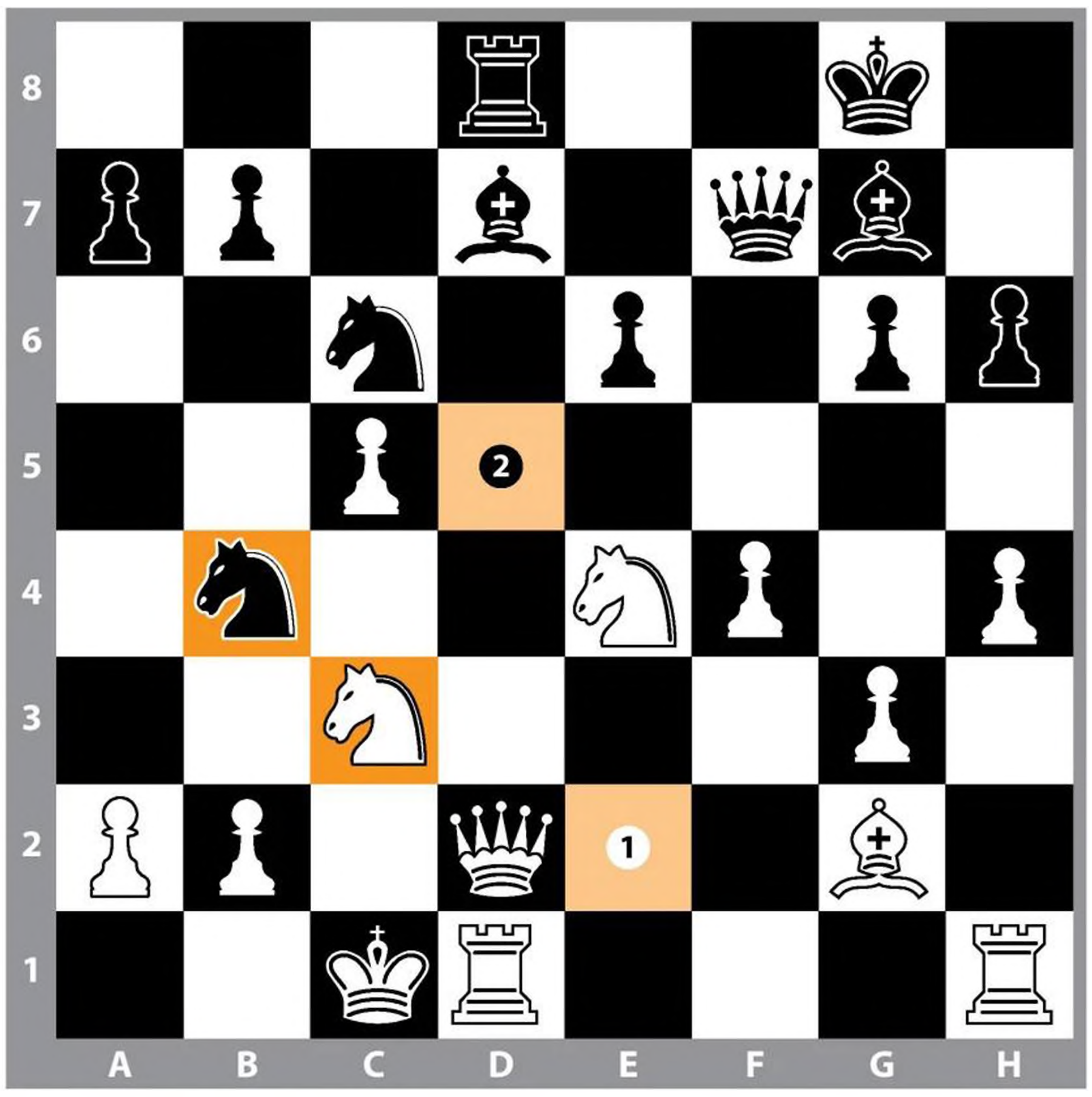
16: The rook is gone White(1) swoops in and takes the rook on f8 which then attacks the black bishop on g7. There is no loss for black in taking the bishop so the rook(2) on a8 takes the it to add extra protection to the king. The mathematical position at this point would put white ahead in terms of piece value, and even the advanced position is somewhat favourable.



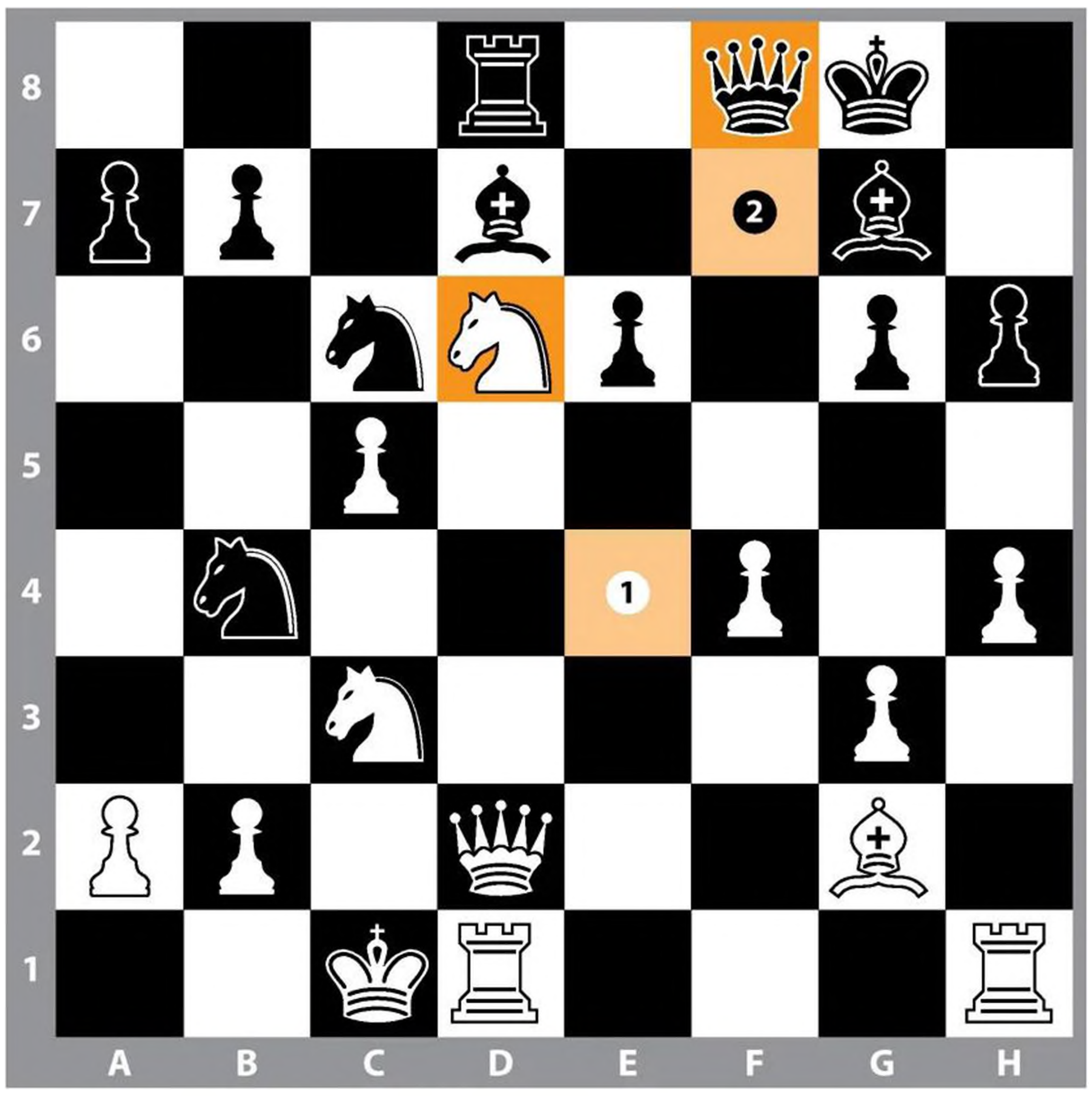
17: A potential battery White's pawn(1) captures the black pawn on c5 to then attack the black knight on b6. Your first thought may be to protect the knight(2) and move it, which is correct, but black moves it to d5 for two reasons. Not only will this protect the knight through the adjacent pawn, but it shields the bishop on d7 from a battery of the white queen and rook.



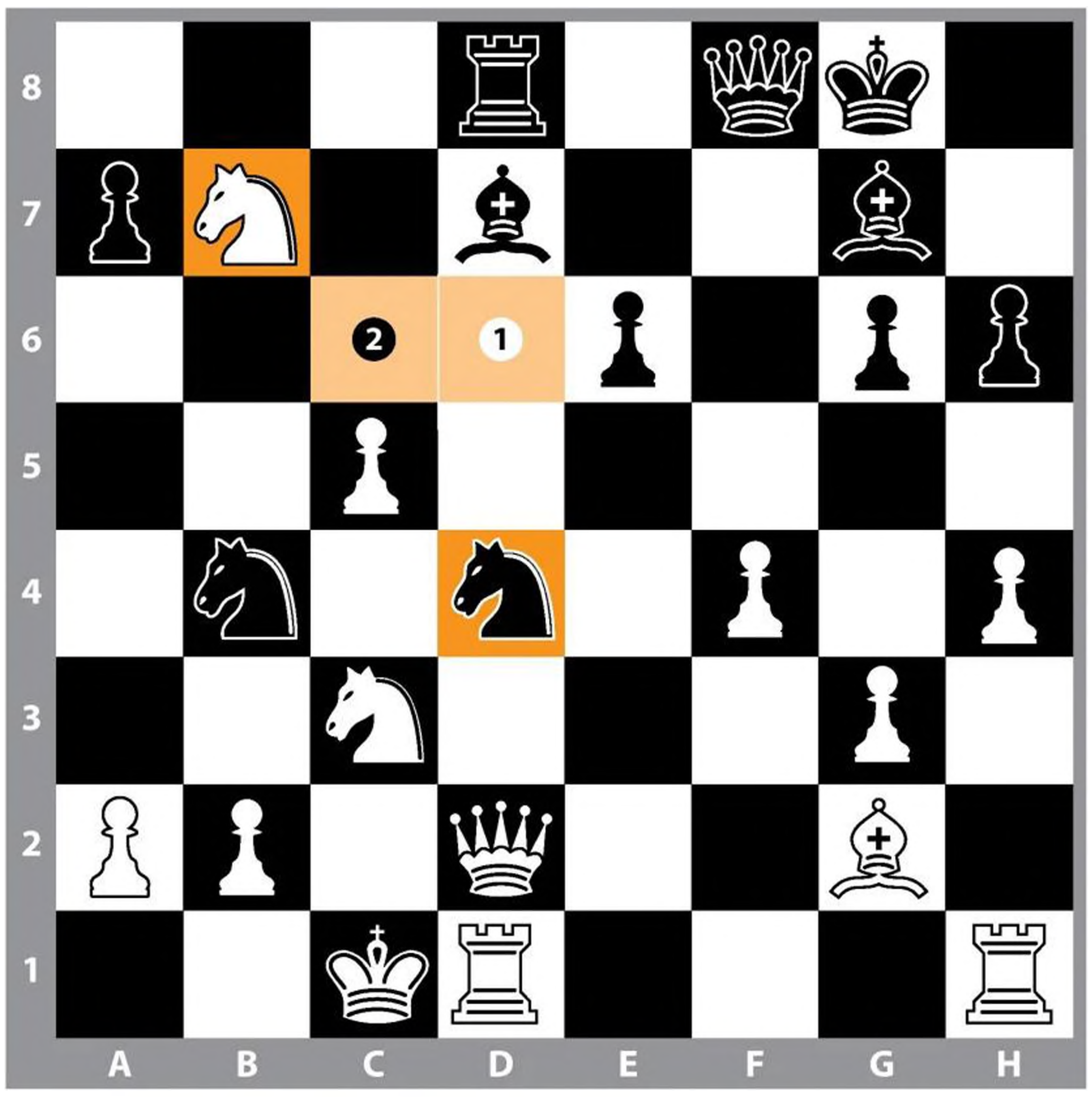
18: Continuing the advance White now moves pawn⁽¹⁾ to f4 to continue the advance; it's protected by the knight on e2 despite being under threat from black's knight on d5. Black then moves the rook⁽²⁾ to d8 to give the bishop and knight some protection. This file is now full of powerful pieces and could divert attention from one player, who may miss a trap.



19: All-out attack The decision by white to move the knight⁽¹⁾ to c3 is aggressive and immediately puts the black knight on d5 under attack. Even though the pawn could take the white knight if it were allowed to advance, an advantage would not be evident. Black decides to move its knight⁽²⁾ to b4, which saves it and protects the d5 square from a move by the white knight.

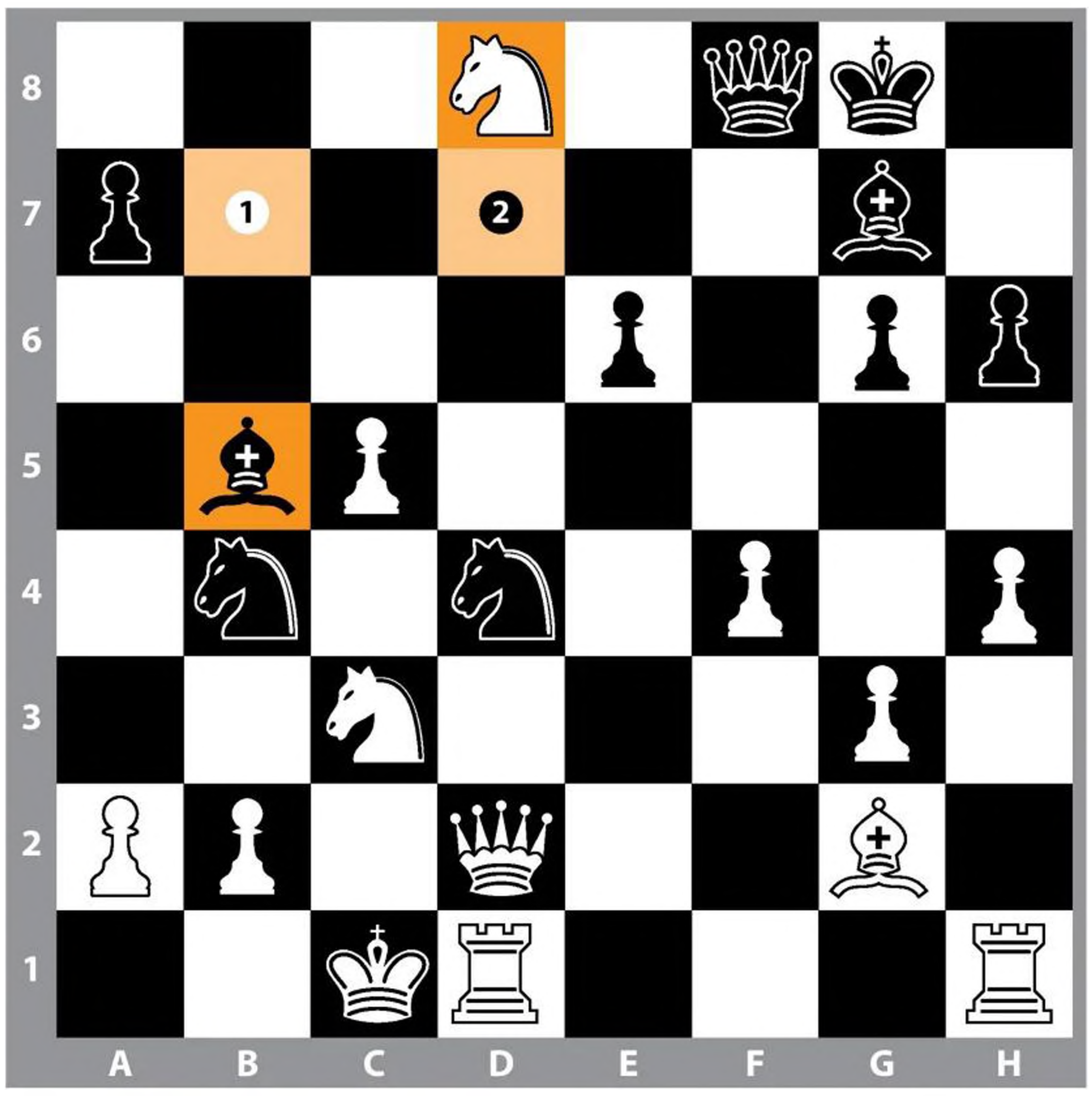


20: Attack the queen! White moves the knight⁽¹⁾ to d6 to attack the queen. As the queen⁽²⁾ is such a valuable piece, black has no choice but to move it to safety and leave the knight in a powerful position. The move by white is quite obvious and should have likely been spotted by black earlier, but this is chess and it is never easy to see what's coming next.

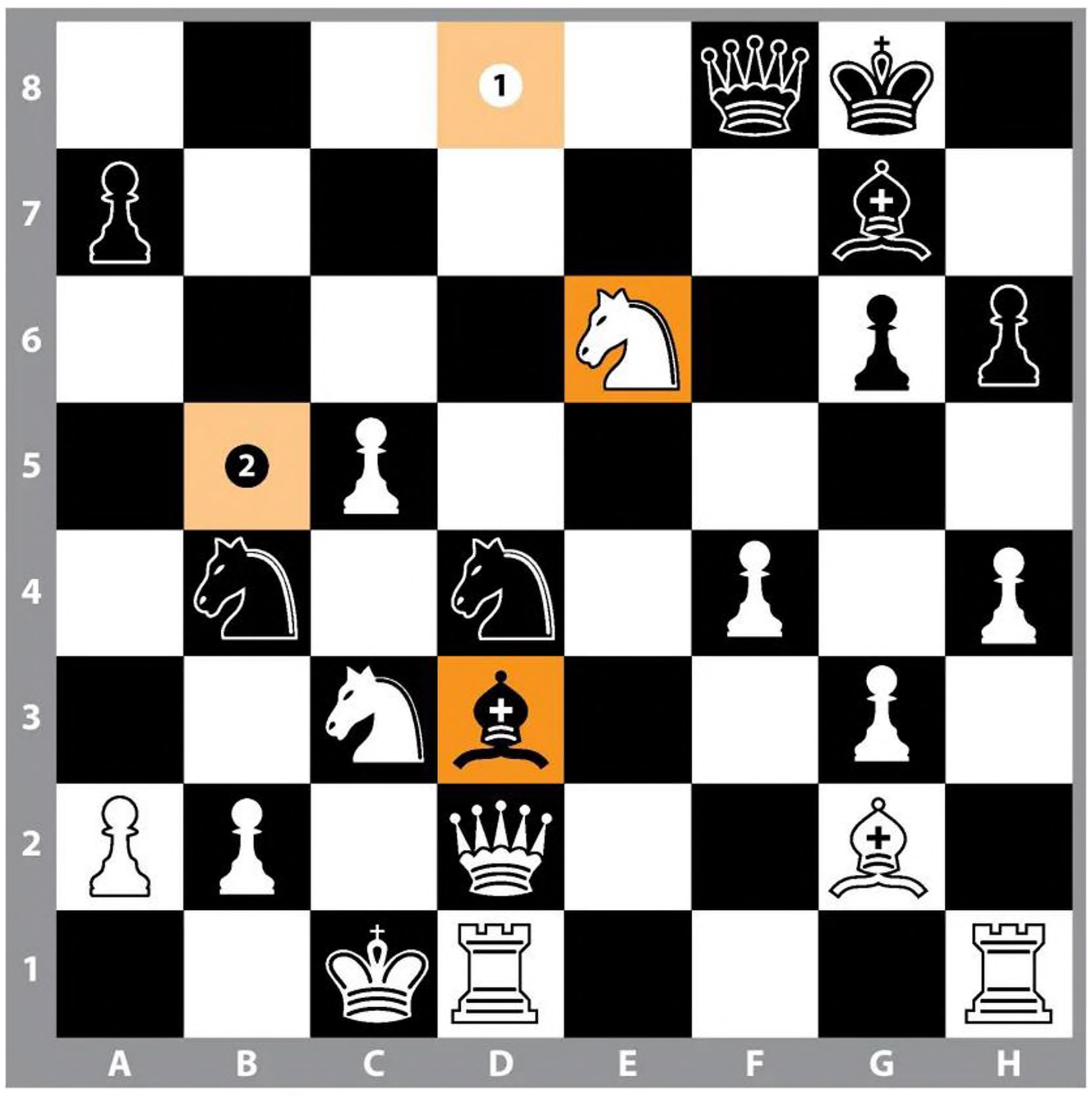


21: A rook in danger White uses the knight⁽¹⁾ to take the b7 pawn so it can now attack the rook. You may think it logical to protect the rook by moving it, but that would put the bishop under threat from the battery of queen and rook, and put black in a very bad position. The only logical choice here is to give up the rook and move the knight⁽²⁾ to d4. Think differently.

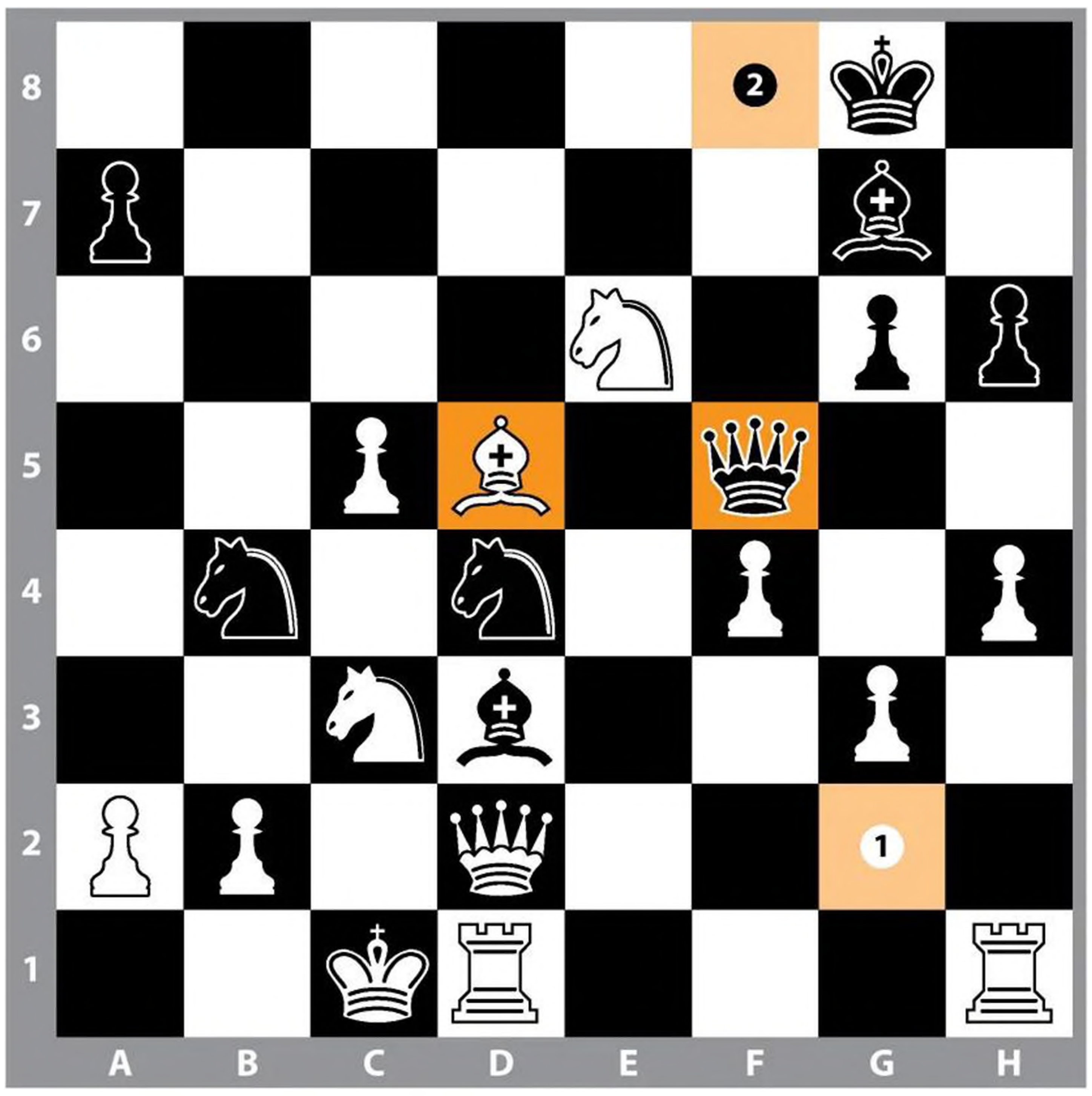
Playing the game



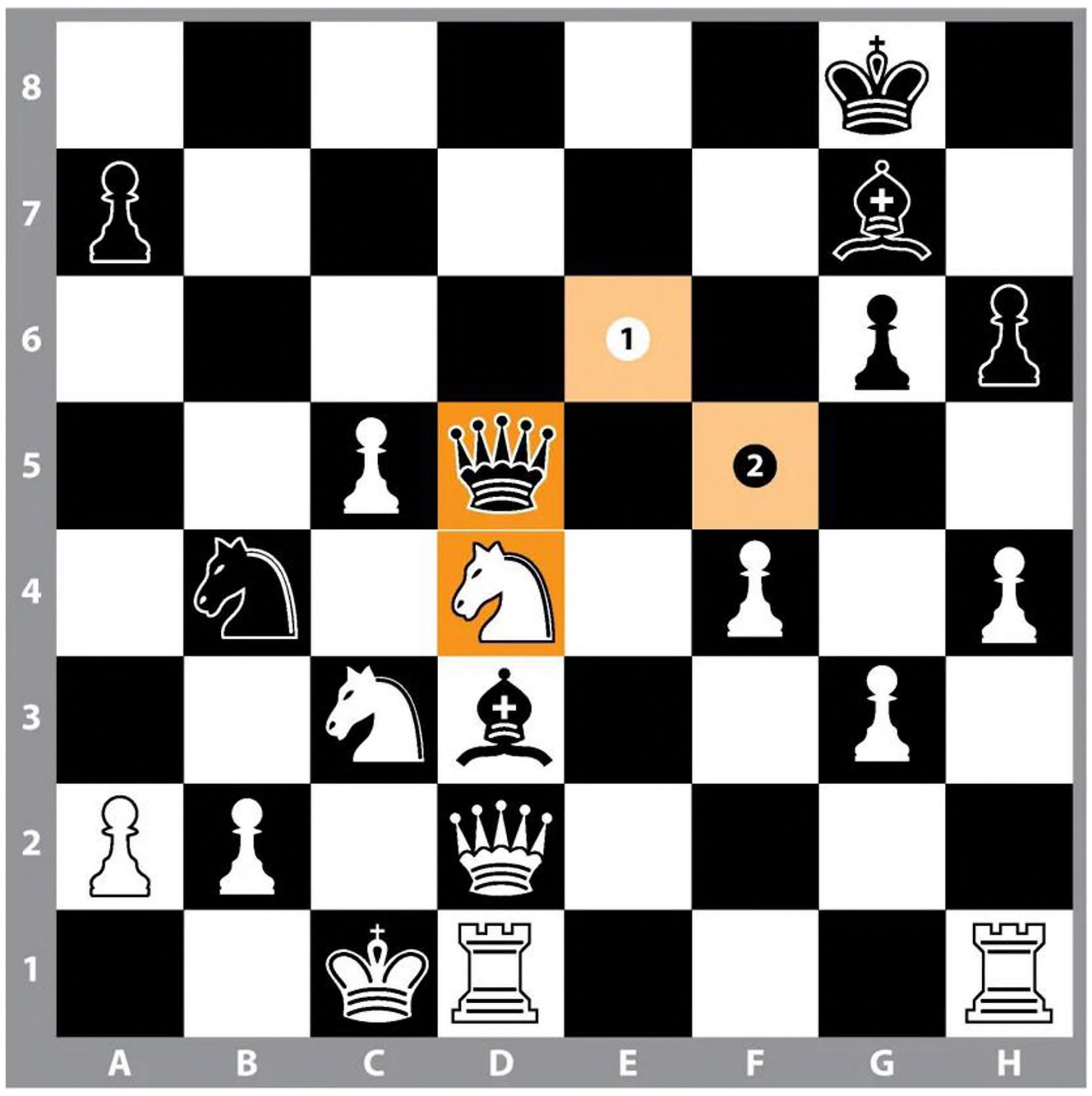
22: A fight back? White makes the obvious move of taking the rook on d8 with the knight(1) and this puts it in an even more powerful position in terms of pieces. The next move by black could be seen as a surprise when it moves the bishop(2) from d7 to b5. It is not offering any obvious piece protection, but is protected by the knight on d4. Is a potential trap being laid?



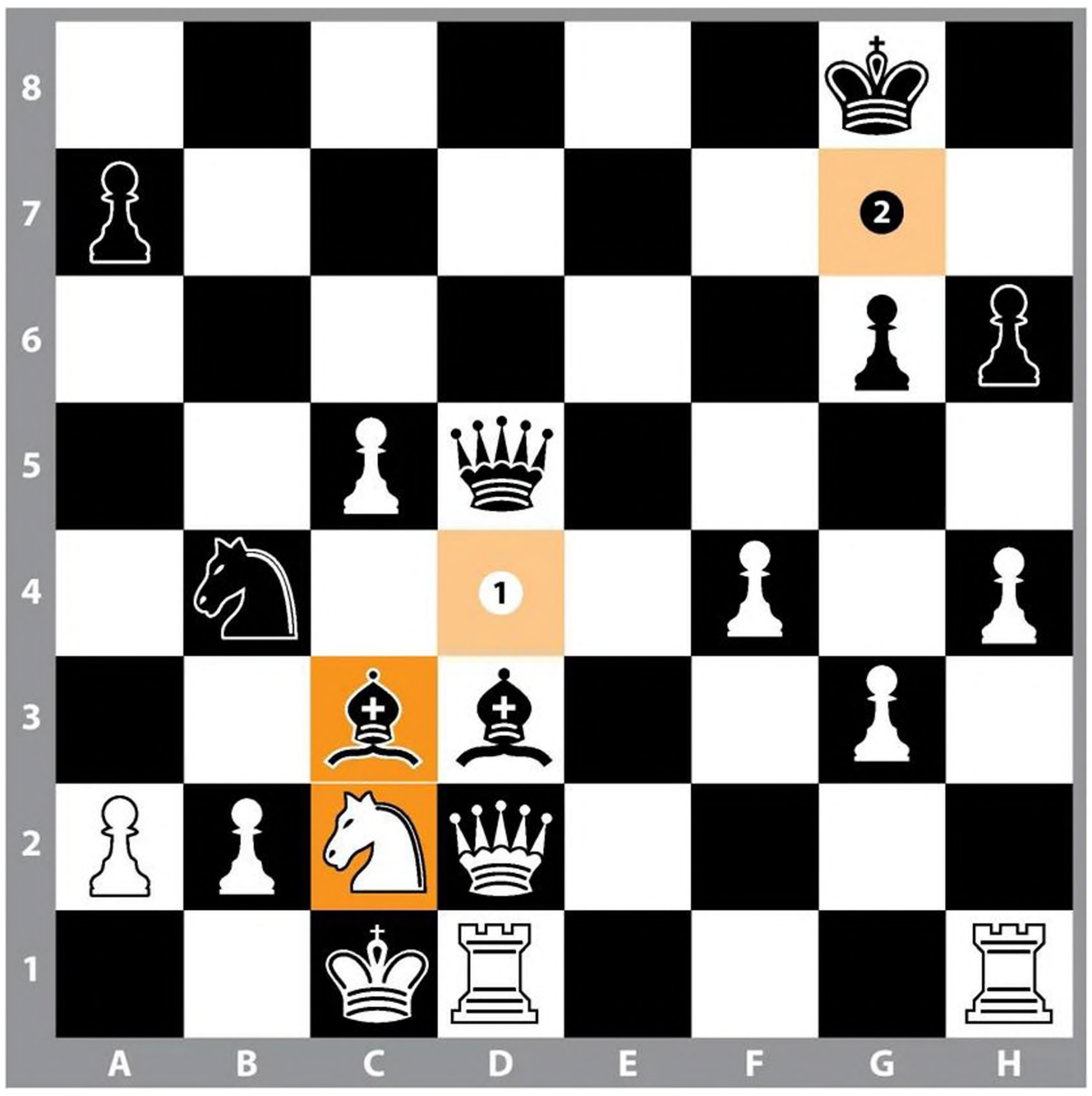
23: Both sides attacking The white knight(1) takes the e6 pawn and threatens the queen. If you are learning to play the game, the obvious move would be to move the queen, but the two black knights are threatening the king? A counter move would be to potentially give up the powerful queen and move the bishop(2) to d3. Take some time to study this position.



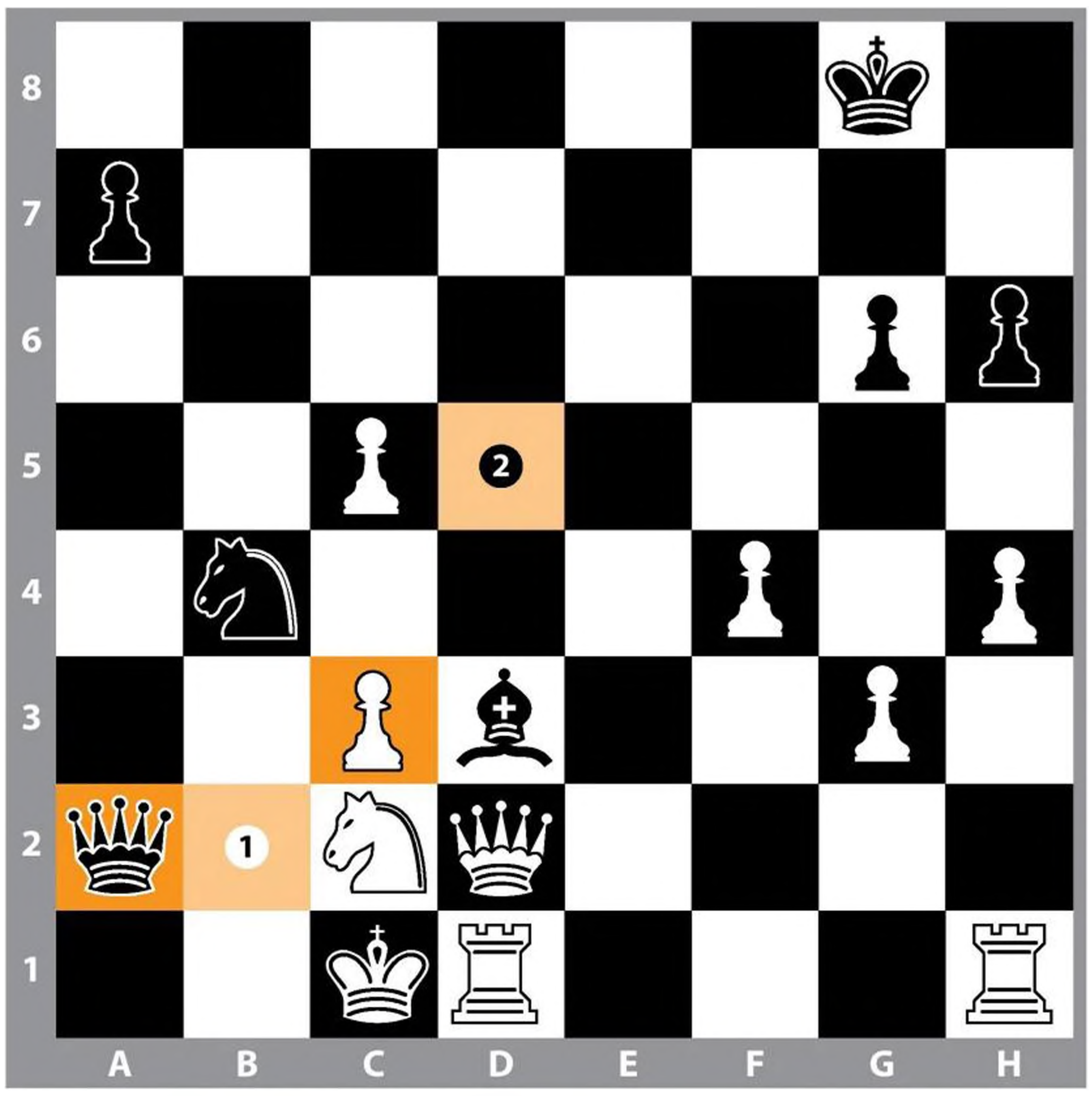
24: A strong move White moves the bishop(1) to d5, which is directly attacking the black king if the white knight moves, but it is also protected by the knight on c3. Black's response of moving the queen(2) to f5 is, however, a threatening move as well. It is protecting the bishop on d3 and is under no threat itself. It still looks like the balance of power is with white.



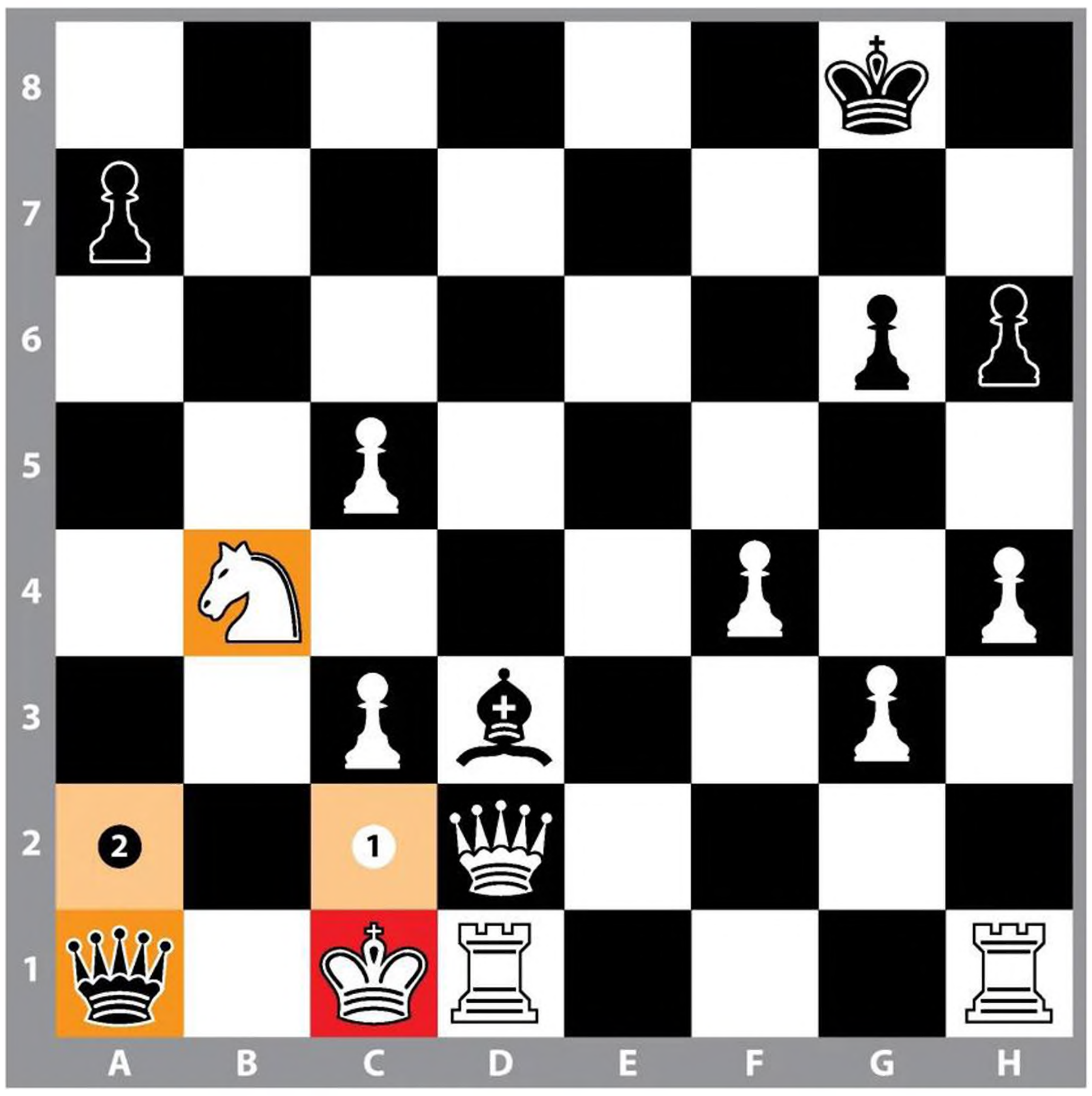
25: Another piece gone White(1) takes the black knight on d4, which also puts the king in check from the white bishop on d5. Black has no choice but to deal with this, so captures the white bishop with the queen(2). You may now think that white should take the queen with the knight on c3, but this would be checkmate in two moves. Can you see how?



26: The danger spotted White spots the danger of black moving knight to a2 and checking the king, so moves its own knight⁽¹⁾ to c2 instead of taking the queen. Black⁽²⁾, however, then takes the white knight on c3 to start to turn the game around. All of a sudden, black appears to be levelling the game from a position of power for white not so many moves ago.



27: Save the queen? White⁽¹⁾ captures the bishop on c3 that is attacking its queen and then black⁽²⁾ captures the pawn on a2 to bring the queen into a very aggressive position. White now has to think carefully about the next move, but is up significantly on piece value and on the face of it is still in a strong position. In chess, however, there may always be a wrong move.



28: The killer move White⁽¹⁾ takes the knight on b4 to directly attack black's queen, but it is in fact a fatal mistake. Black⁽²⁾ moves to a1 to put the white king in checkmate. The passage of play near the end of the game highlights how a game can be turned around with fewer pieces and clever thinking. It does help if your opponent doesn't see the trap, of course.

A clever trap

One wrong move

Black won this game with some clever thinking despite the fact that it was way down on piece value. For the vast majority of the game, white was in a strong position and ultimately one move decided it. If white had taken black's knight in the penultimate move with the pawn on c3 instead, it is highly likely that white would have been able to use the extra pieces and win the game quite comfortably. This entire game highlights how chess is never over until the very final move and that it can swing many times throughout, but remember that this is a fairly advanced example.

Reference

Explore history's inspirational chess games, a glossary of terminology, have your questions answered and more

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A list of notable ways to start a game

> “Throughout the history of chess, there are games that stand out for many reasons”

Inspirational chess games

We take a look back through the history of the game and pick the seven most inspiring games of chess ever played

Top tip

View the games

There are videos of these entire games played out on a digital board on YouTube, along with a commentary explaining the moves in detail. It is a great way to learn tactics and gain a deeper understanding of the game.

Throughout the history of chess, there are games that stand out for many reasons. If you look up a list of top chess games, however, you will find that experts rarely agree with one another as to what should make the grade. You will also find that many of the games listed tend to be historical rather than modern. This is because the older games are the ones that introduced new and exciting strategies that have strongly influenced today's players.

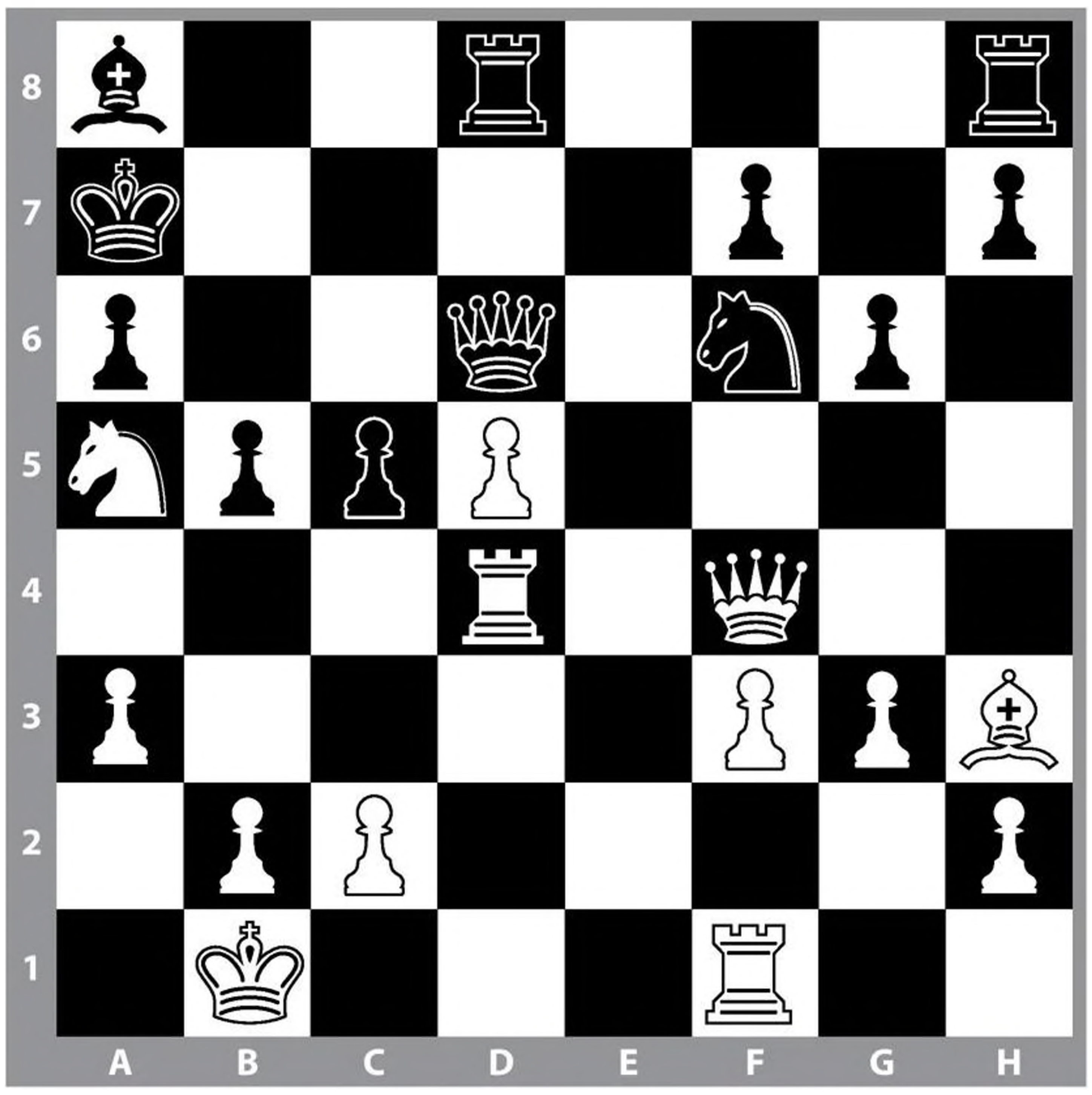
In putting together our list of the most inspirational chess games for these pages, we have looked for the ones that have introduced new moves, featured surprising twists or have simply broken new ground.

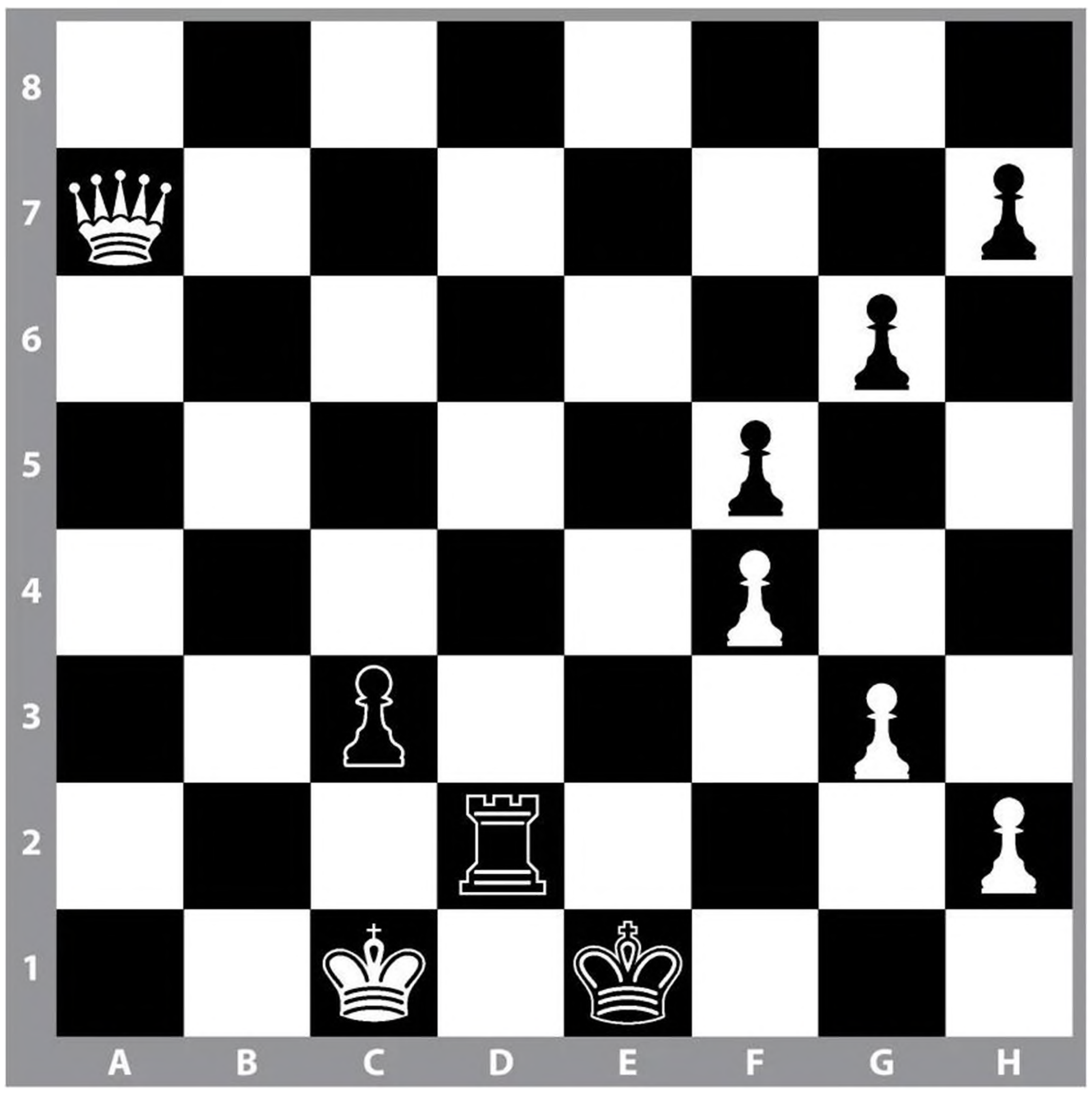
Of course, this is just a small selection and there are plenty of other amazing chess games that we haven't had space to mention here and which any new player can look at for inspiration. For example, Karpov vs Kasparov in 1985 pitted two of the greatest players of all time against each other. Kasparov made a brilliant 23rd move, placing his rook on a square that seemed an unusual decision, only to be pivotal later down the line. It is games such as this that remind us of how these chess masters think and plan well ahead, predicting outcomes and moves that most of us would never be able to contemplate.

Take a look at our pick of the top chess games ever played and be inspired.

Kasparov's Immortal Garry Kasparov **vs** Veselin Topalov, 1999

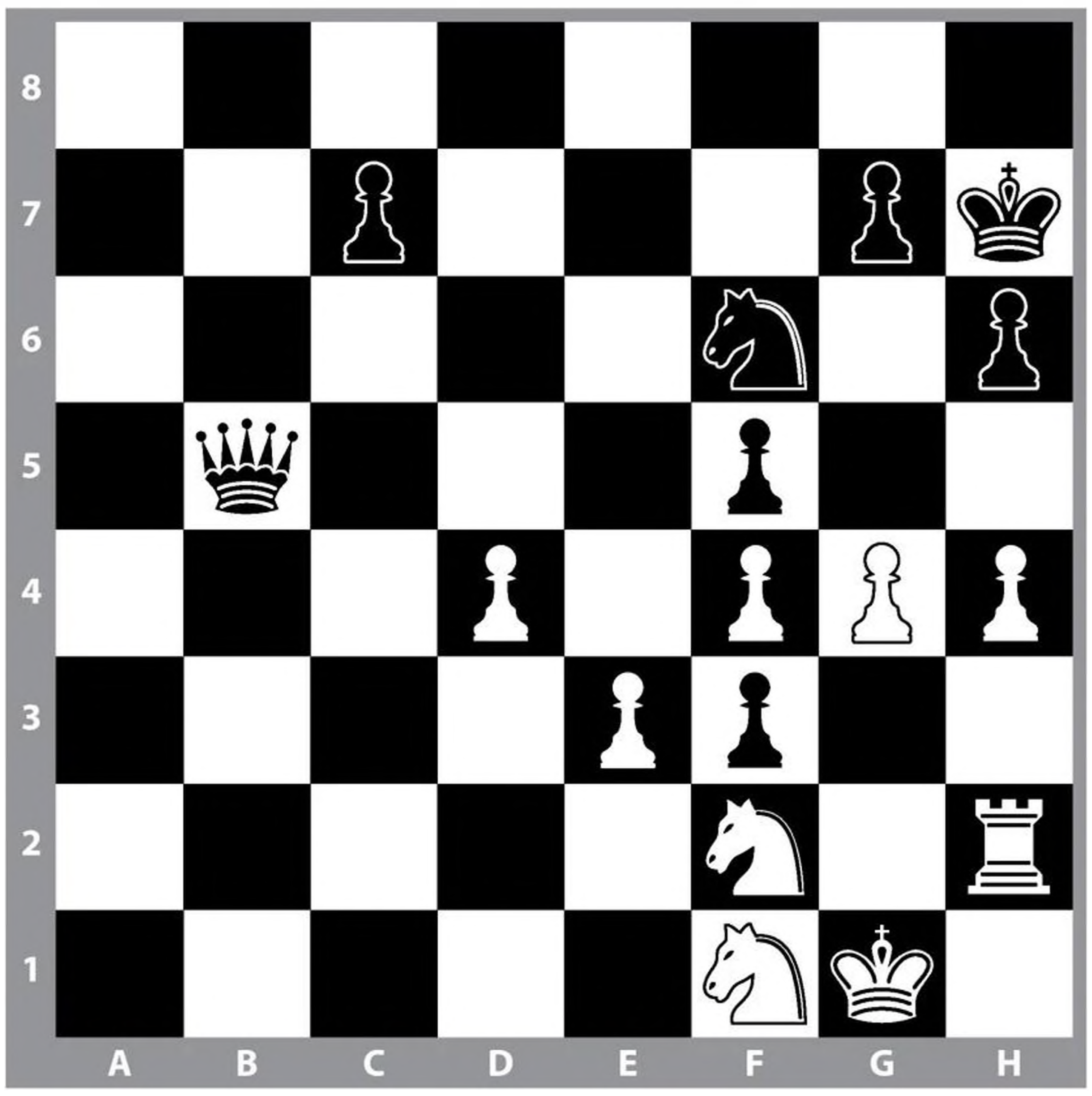
This game took place in Wijk aan Zee in Holland and is considered one of the best attacking games every played. Kasparov (white) began aggressively, but Topalov (black) held his own and secured a strong position on the board using the Pirc Defence. Kasparov started to struggle from moves 14-24, when he fought to keep his position. It is move 24 that is the most noteworthy of the game, where Kasparov starts a sacrificial sequence, giving up key pieces to attack Topalov's king. Topalov pushed forward, but ultimately lost the game to Kasparov's relentless attack, resigning after the 44th move.

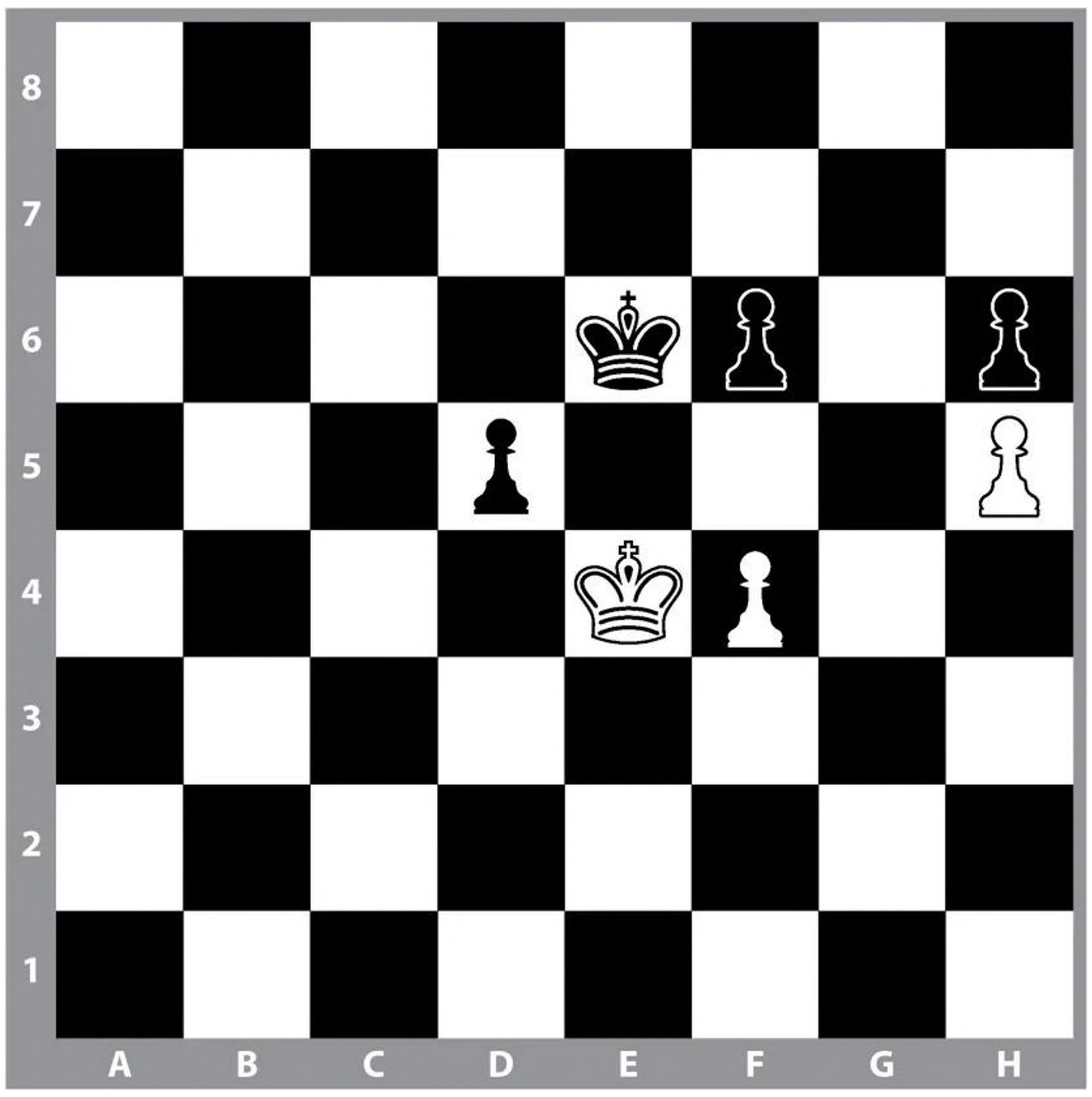




The Triple Queen Sacrifice Efim Bogoljubov **vs** Alexander Alekhine, **1922**

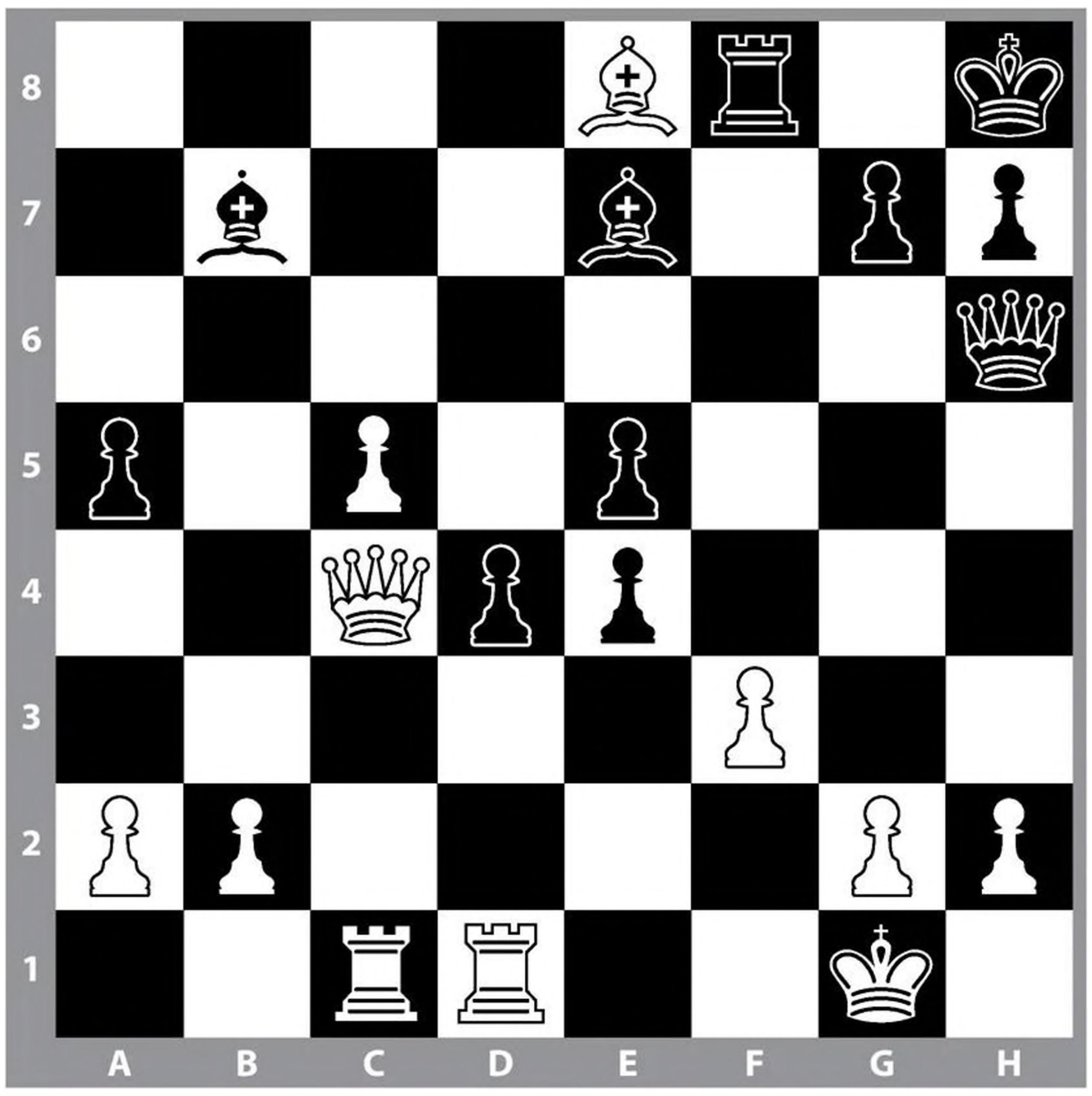
Held in Hastings, UK, in 1922, this game is considered to be one of Alekhine's most brilliant. Bogoljubov (white) was quickly surprised by Alekhine (black), who used the Dutch Defence, a move not often seen in tournament games. This set the tone for the rest of the game, with black moving forward in an aggressive manner and using moves that were unconventional, leaving white often being forced into making moves with little choice. Alekhine goes through three queen sacrifices throughout the game and Bogoljubov resigns after the 53rd move, preventing the creation of a fourth queen.

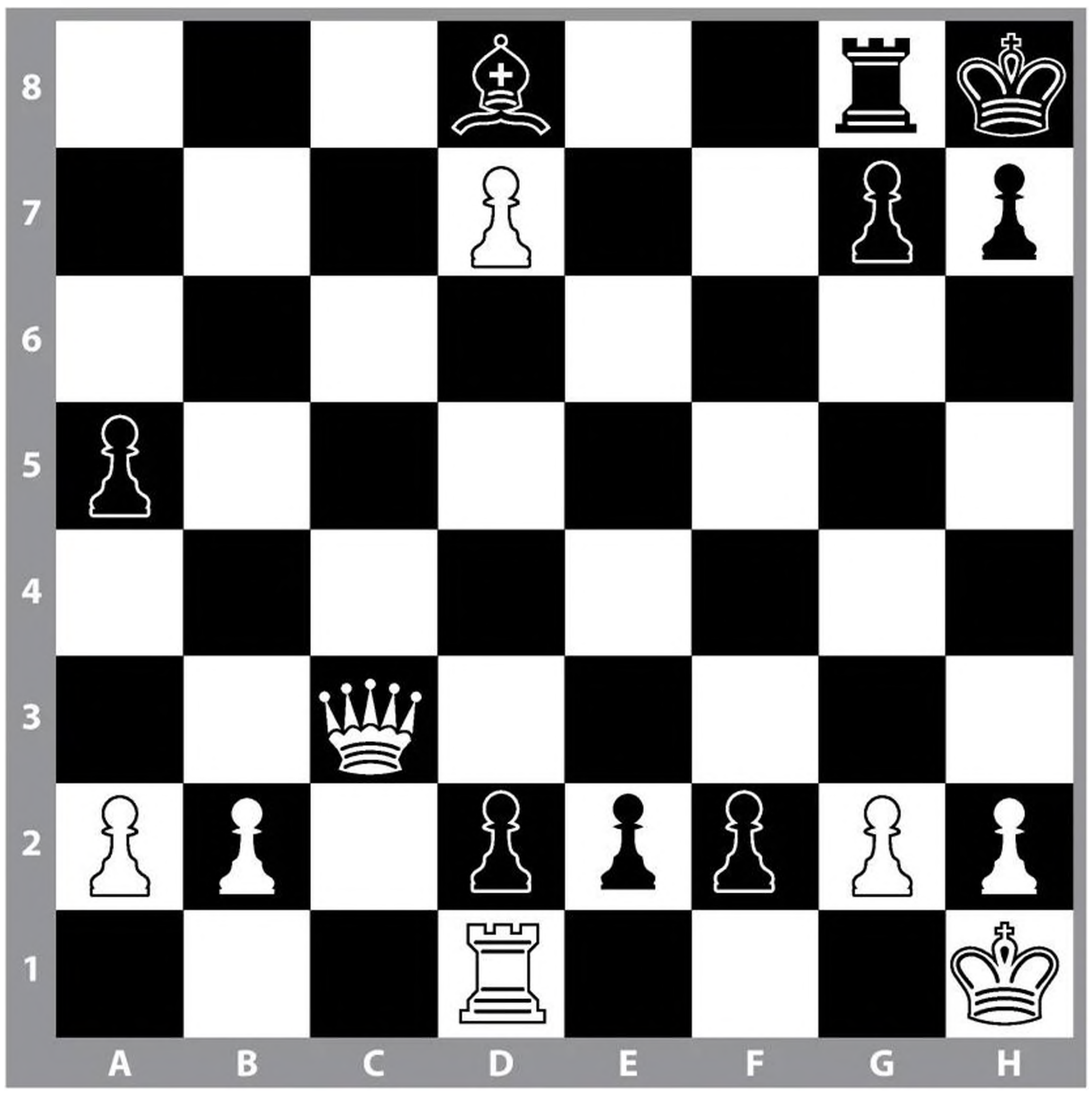




McDonnell vs La Bourdonnais Alexander McDonnell **vs** La Bourdonnais, **1834**

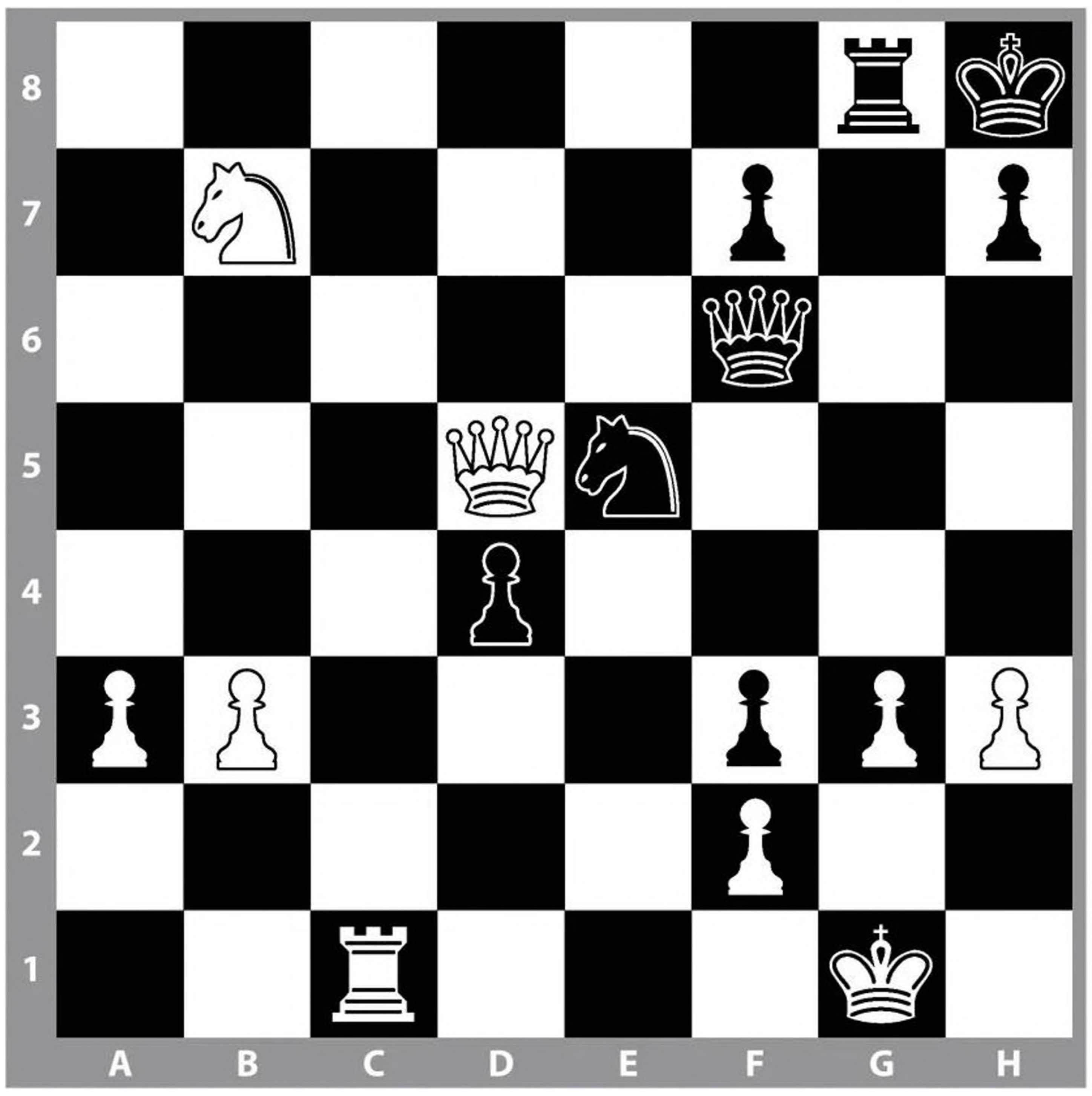
The final position of the game, where white (McDonnell) resigns, is considered to be one of the most famous ever. At the time of the match, La Bourdonnais was considered to be the unofficial world champion. The two players met several times in 1834 and this game was the 62nd of the entire series. La Bourdonnais sets up a powerful pawn centre, activating them after the 23rd move where he makes an exchange sacrifice that determines victory in the game. The game is also noted for being one of the first to use, and therefore popularising, the Sicilian Defence, which is used a lot nowadays.

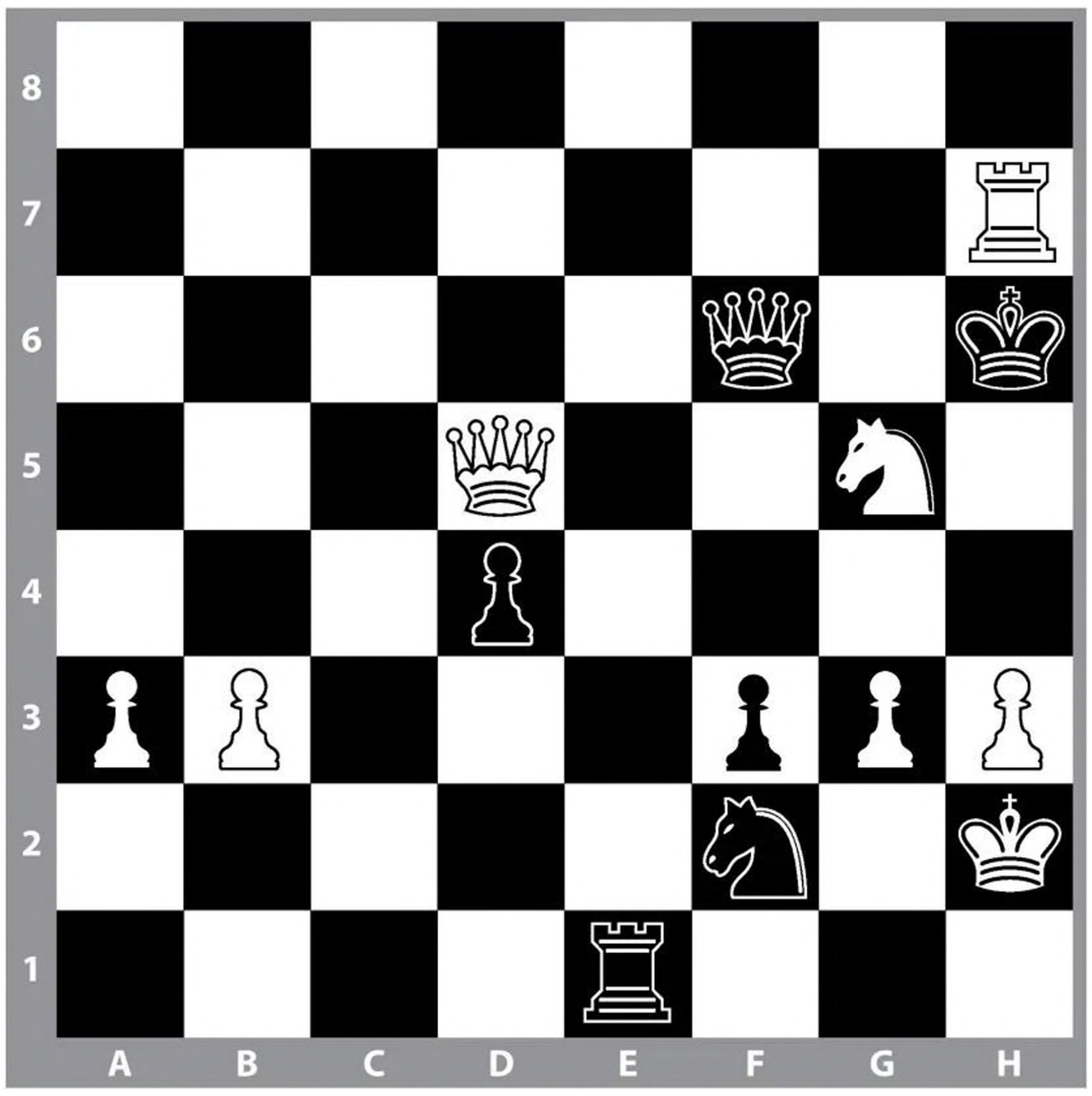




Deep Blue vs Kasparov Deep Blue vs Garry Kasparov, 1996

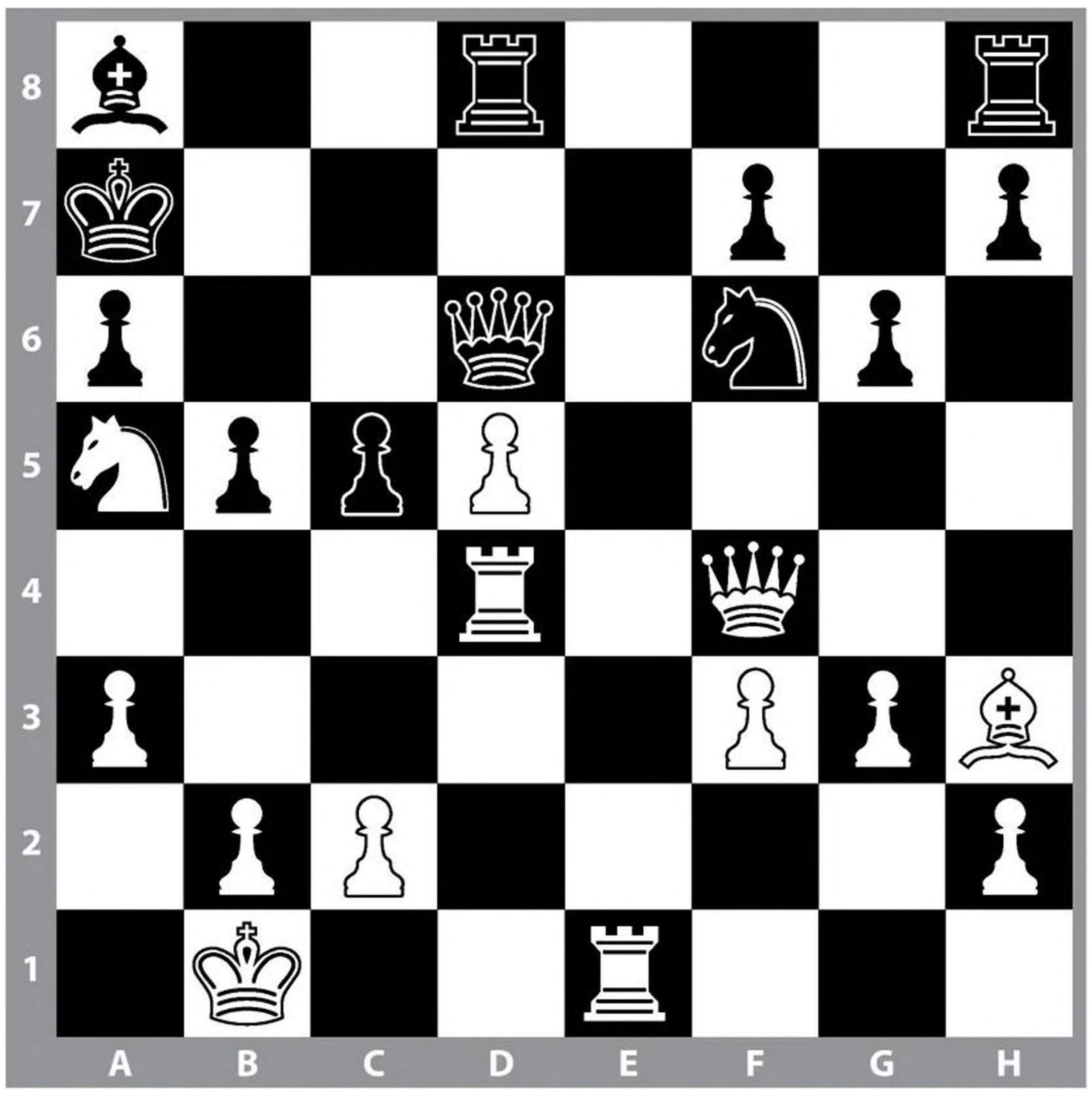
IBM's Deep Blue supercomputer and Garry Kasparov met in two key matches. The first game in the 1996 match is notable for being the first time that a computer defeated a World Champion under normal tournament chess conditions. The game opened with the popular Sicilian Defence, Deep Blue setting it up playing as white. The opening moves had been determined by the IBM team, but after Kasparov introduced a new approach, Deep Blue began calculating the moves needed to win. Kasparov tried a late game attack from move 30, but Deep Blue rose to the threat and Kasparov eventually resigned.

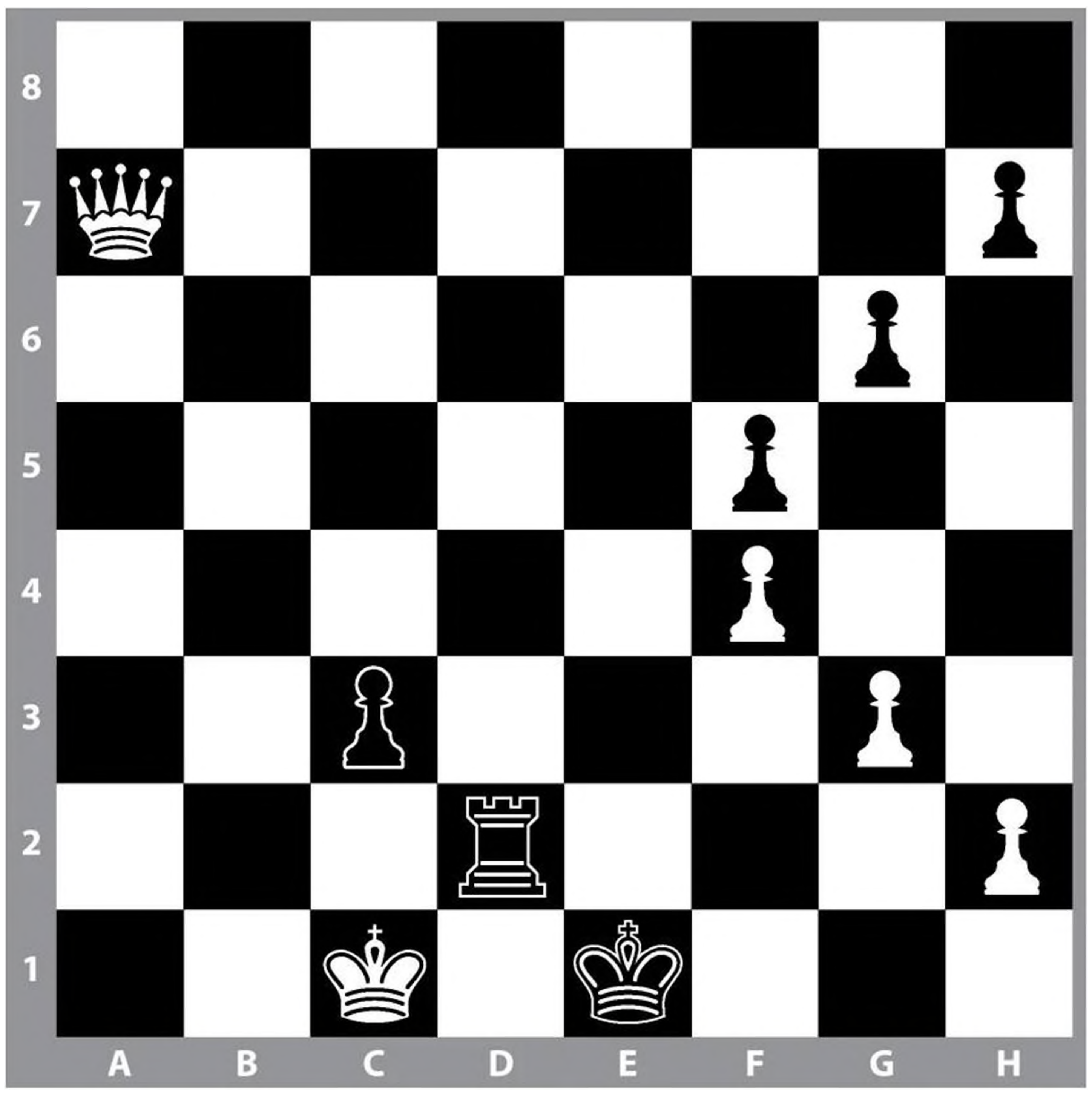




Immortal Game Adolf Anderssen vs Lionel Adalbert Bagration Felix Kieseritzky, 1851

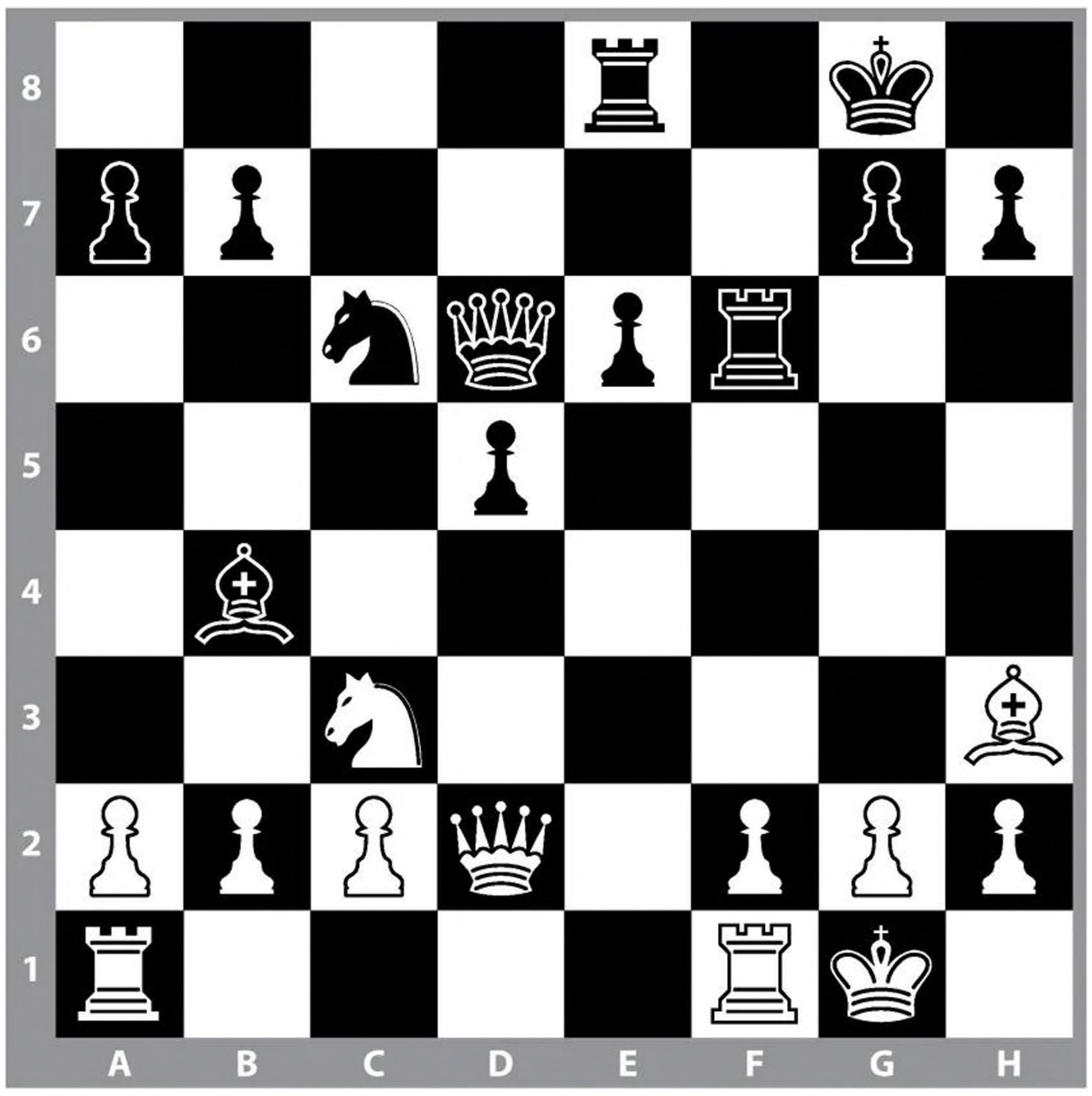
This game is known as the Immortal Game because of the way that Anderssen (playing as white) made numerous sacrifices throughout of key pieces and yet still went on to be victorious. The game was part of the first international chess tournament in London. It begins with the King's Gambit, which was a popular move back in the 19th century but is less popular now since better defensive techniques are usually employed in modern chess. The final board shows that black has more pieces still in play, but white maintains the positional advantage and therefore gains the win.

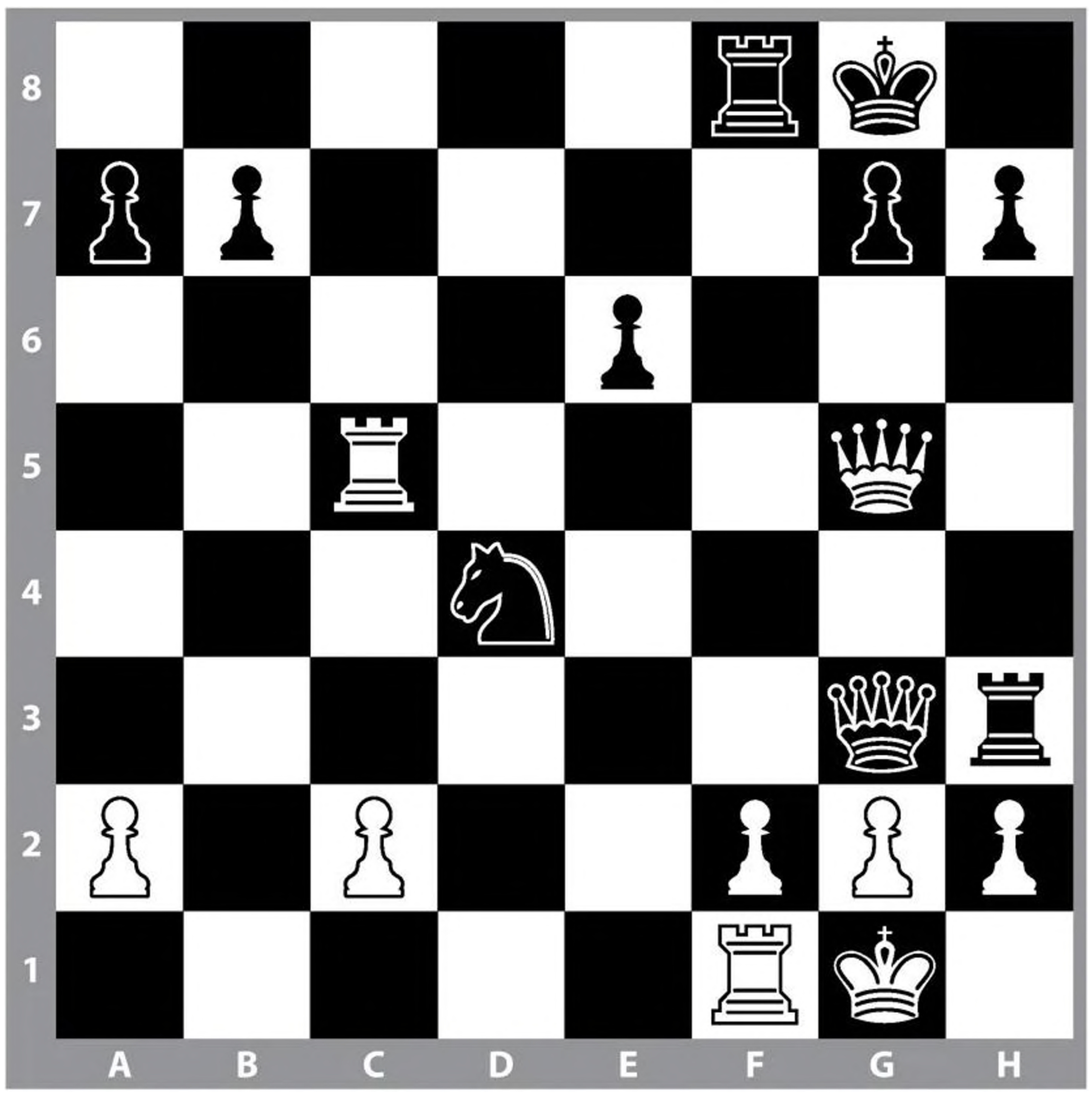




Levitsky vs Marshall Stepan Levitsky vs Frank James Marshall, 1912

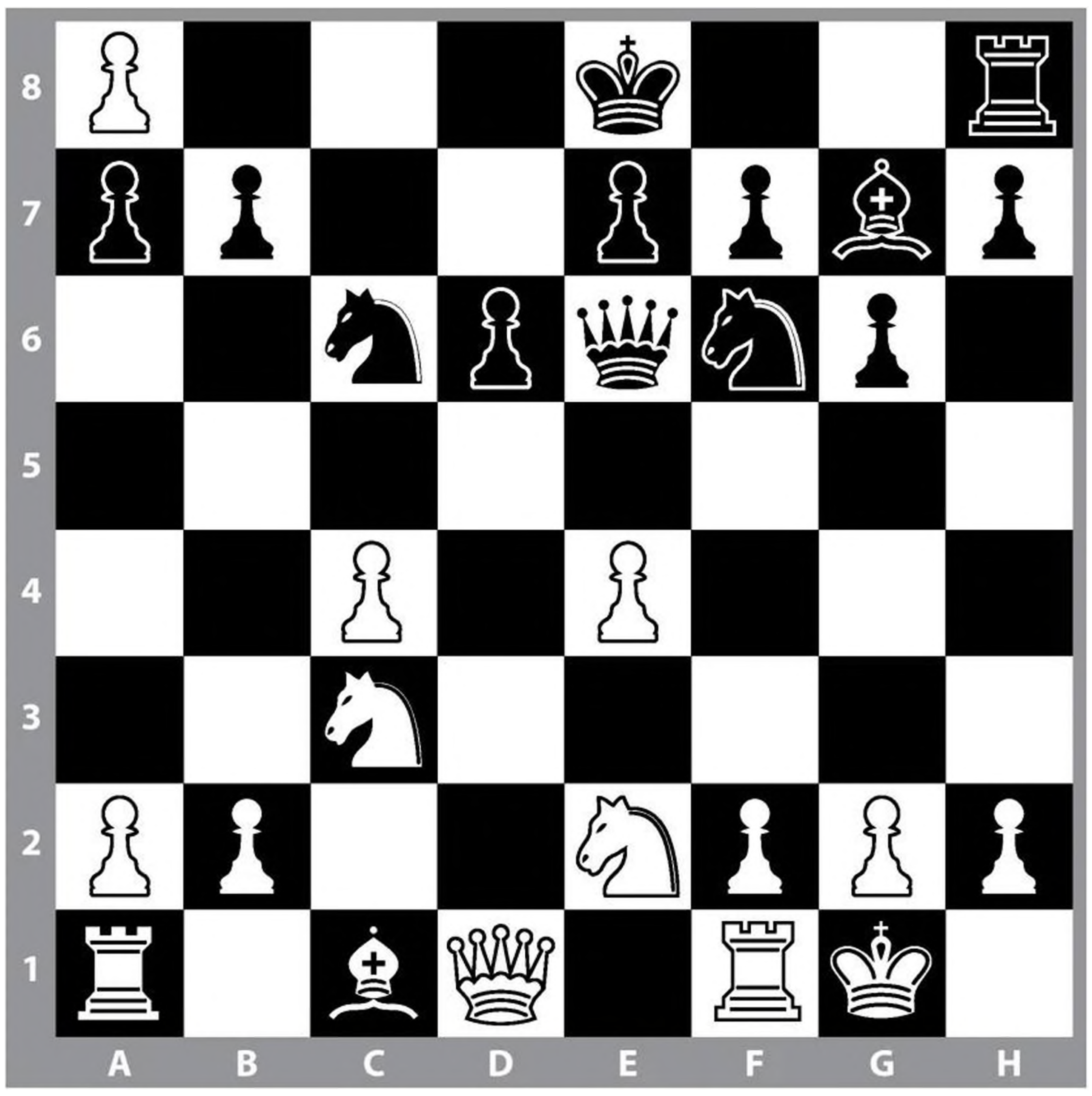
This game was played during the master's tournament of the DSB (Deutschen Schachbund) Congress. Levitsky, playing white, was the weaker player going into the game, as Marshall was the US chess champion from 1909 to 1936. Therefore, the quality of play and the outcome was not what makes this game worthy of a position in the top games; it is instead Marshall's final move in claiming victory that stands out. He places his queen in a position where three of white's pieces can attack it; however, any continuation of the game after that move would lead to checkmate – hence Levitsky resigned the game.

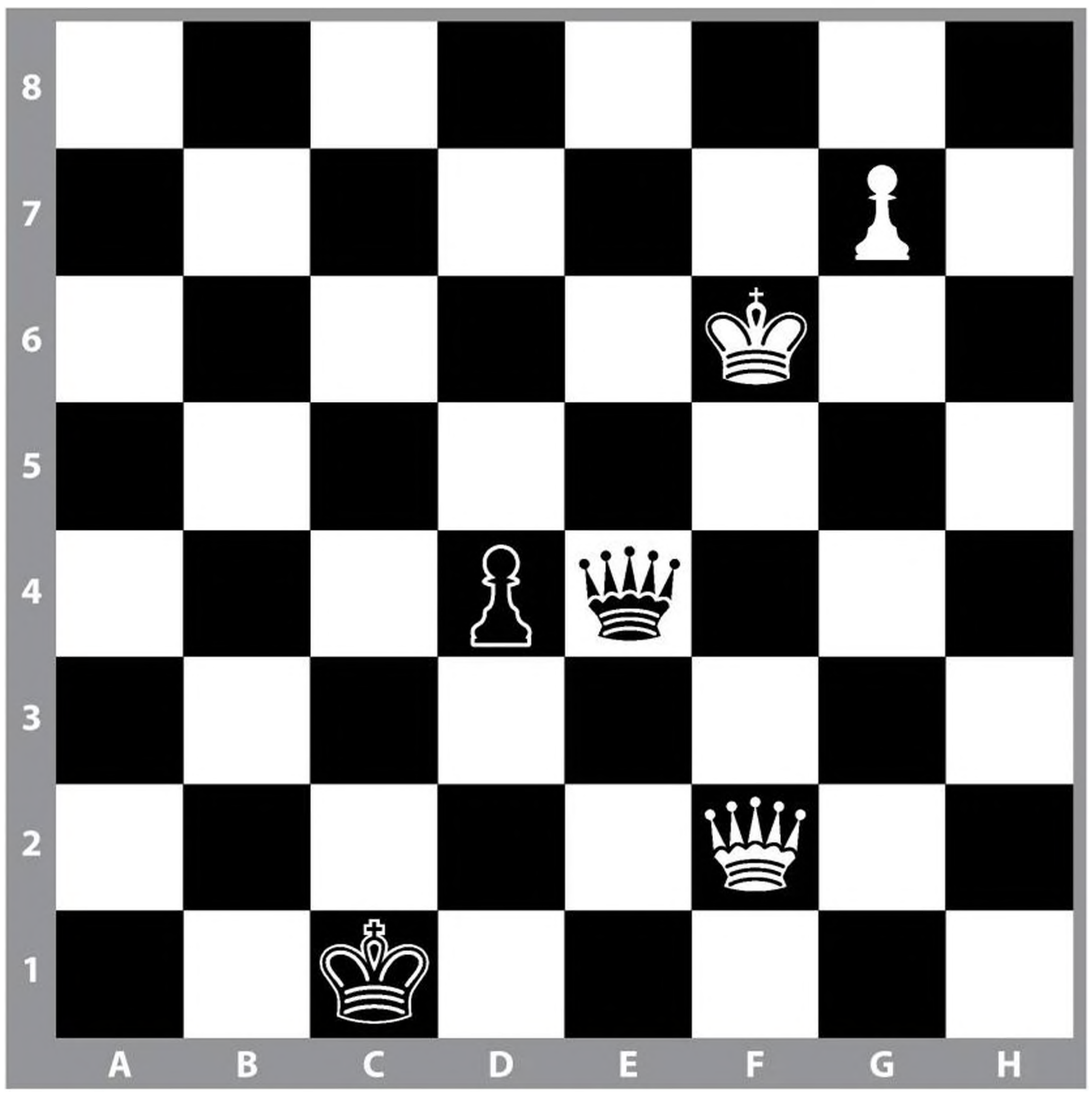




Kasparov vs The World Garry Kasparov vs World Team, 1999

This game was played over the internet, where Garry Kasparov (white) would play a 'World Team' whose moves were determined by a vote from over 50,000 people in 75 countries. Kasparov himself said that this was 'the greatest game of chess in history' and one of the most difficult of his career, playing out over 62 moves and four months before he took the victory. Previous collaborative internet games had presented little difficulty for chess masters, but this game was notable for giving a strong tactical and strategic challenge due to young chess talents being among the World Team and a slower rate of play – just one move a day.





Chess FAQs

Every Chess question from the promotion of pawns, castling, who goes first and the way to win a game, answered for you here in the FAQ

Pawn promotion

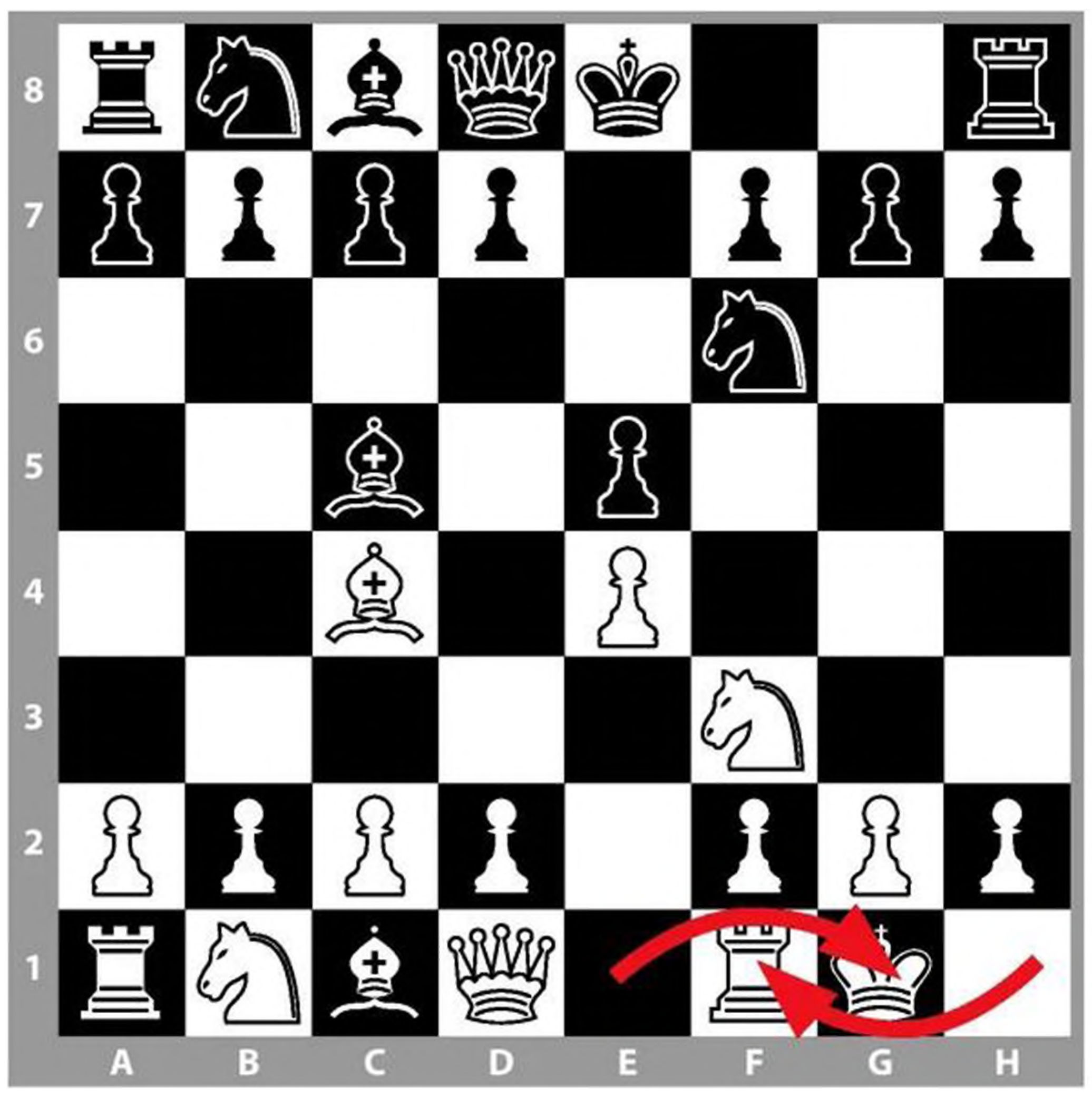
Is it possible to promote a pawn to a queen if I already have a queen on the board? I don't have another queen piece to use!

In short, yes. When a pawn reaches its eighth rank (the far end of the game board), it is immediately changed (or 'promoted') into the player's choice of a queen, knight, rook or bishop of the same colour – regardless of whether the player in control of the pawn already has these pieces on the board. When a pawn is promoted to a queen, the process is referred to as 'queening'. It is very rare that the player promoting the pawn would choose to promote to any piece other than the highly versatile queen, but if this is the case then the process is called 'underpromotion'. If the promoted piece is not physically available (such as if the queen piece of the same colour is still in play), then in casual play an upside-down rook may be used to represent a second queen.

King of the castle

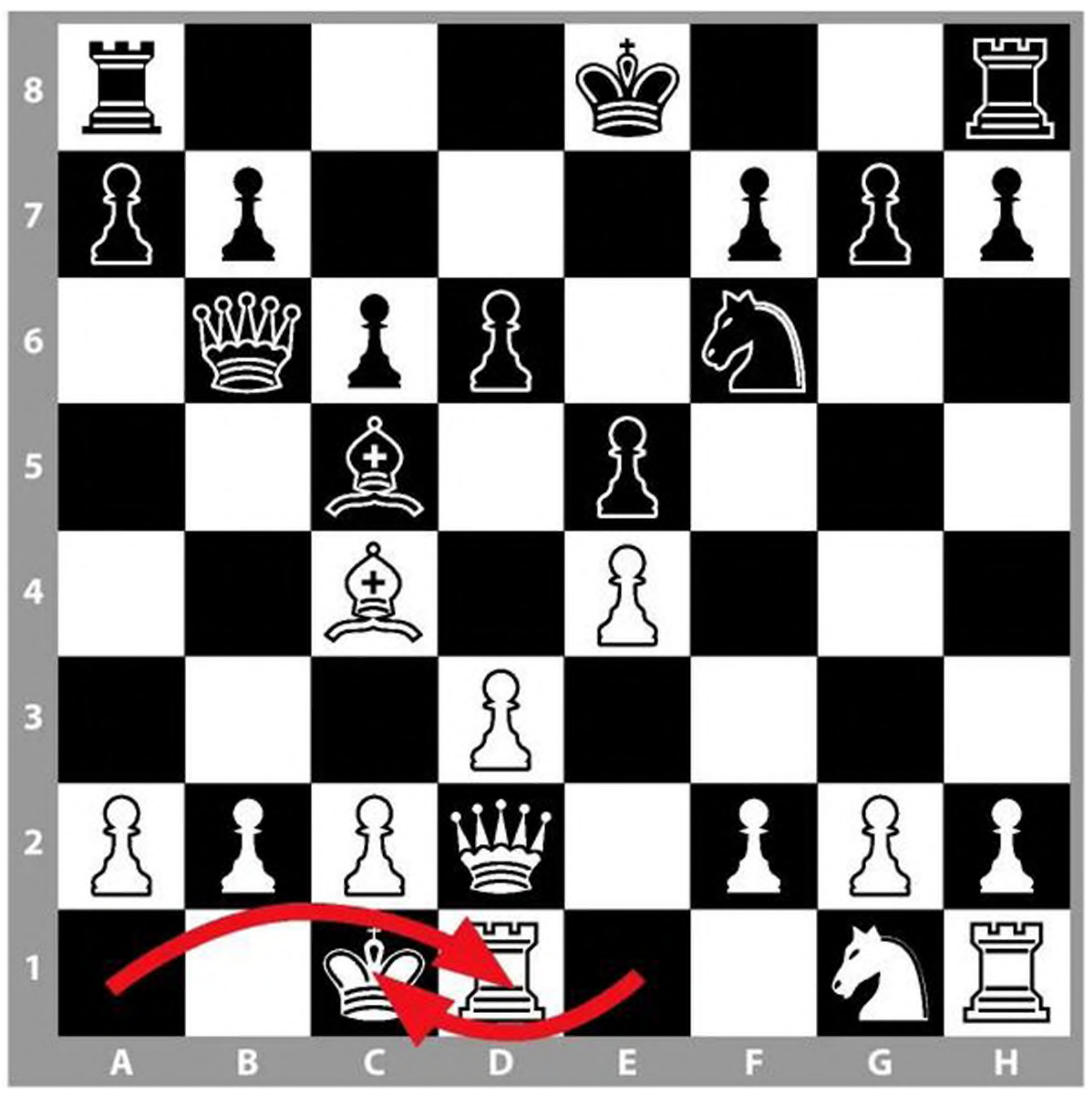
Can a king castle after having been in check?

Castling is a special type of chess move whereby you simultaneously move your king and one of your rooks. The king moves two squares towards a rook – on the king's or queen's side – and that rook moves to the square at the other side of the king. Castling is not permitted when (a) your king has been moved earlier in the game, (b) the rook that castles has been moved earlier in the game, (c) when there are pieces positioned between your king and your rook, (d) when the king moves through a square that is being attacked by an opponent's piece, (e) if your king is currently in check and (f) if your king would be in check after castling. Therefore, if your king has been put in check in an earlier move but isn't currently in check (and hasn't previously been moved) then it can still be castled.



1: Short castling

There are two types of castling – short (on the 'kingside') and long (on the 'queenside'). In both cases the king moves two squares and the rook moves either two or three squares. This diagram demonstrates white castling short (if the white king started on e1 and the white rook started on h1).



2: Long castling

This diagram demonstrates an example of long castling in the white pieces (if the white king started on e1 and the white rook started on a1), with the king moving two spaces and the rook moving three spaces. The king and rook pieces may not capture opposing pieces when castling.

Checkmate?

I accidentally left my king in check after making a move – have I lost the game?

Not in a standard game, since it would be deemed an illegal move and you would have to play an alternative. Under standard chess rules, a player may not make any move which places or leaves their king in check – instead the player must move the king, capture the threatening piece or block the check with another piece. However, there are some variations of the rules. In Antichess (or Losing chess), for example, the goal is for the player to lose all of their pieces, whereas in fast chess a player *is* permitted to leave their king in check – the opponent may then claim the win. In informal games it is customary to say "check" aloud when entering into a move that places the opposing king in check, so the player in check has clear warning that their next move should involve focusing on getting their king out of check, but in more formal competitions this isn't a requirement and so it is down to the players to know whether they are in check or not.

1: Capturing the attacking piece

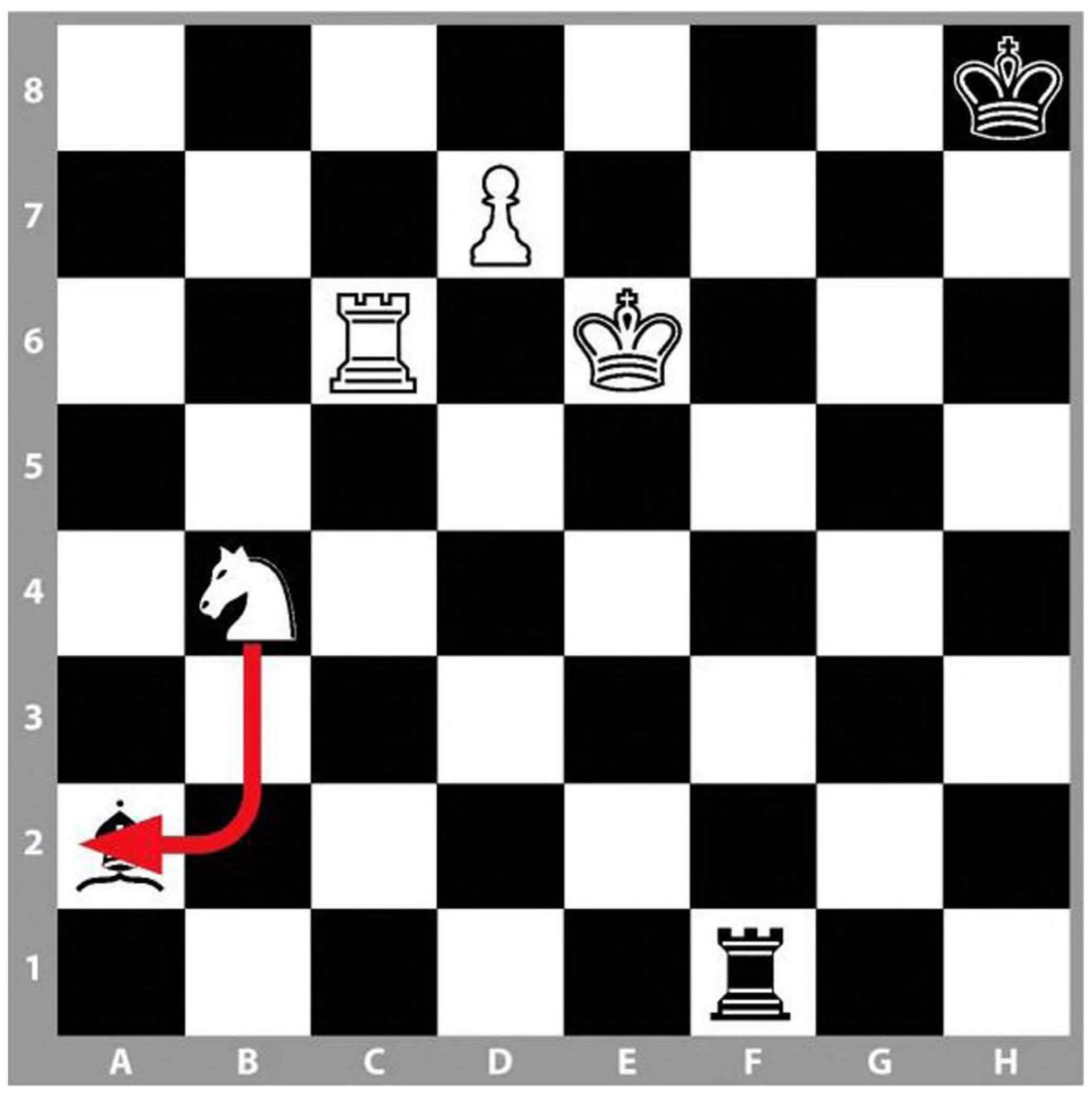
There are three main ways to get out of check. The first involves capturing the checking piece – either with the king or with another piece. Here the white king is in check, but the knight can be used to captured the attacking bishop.

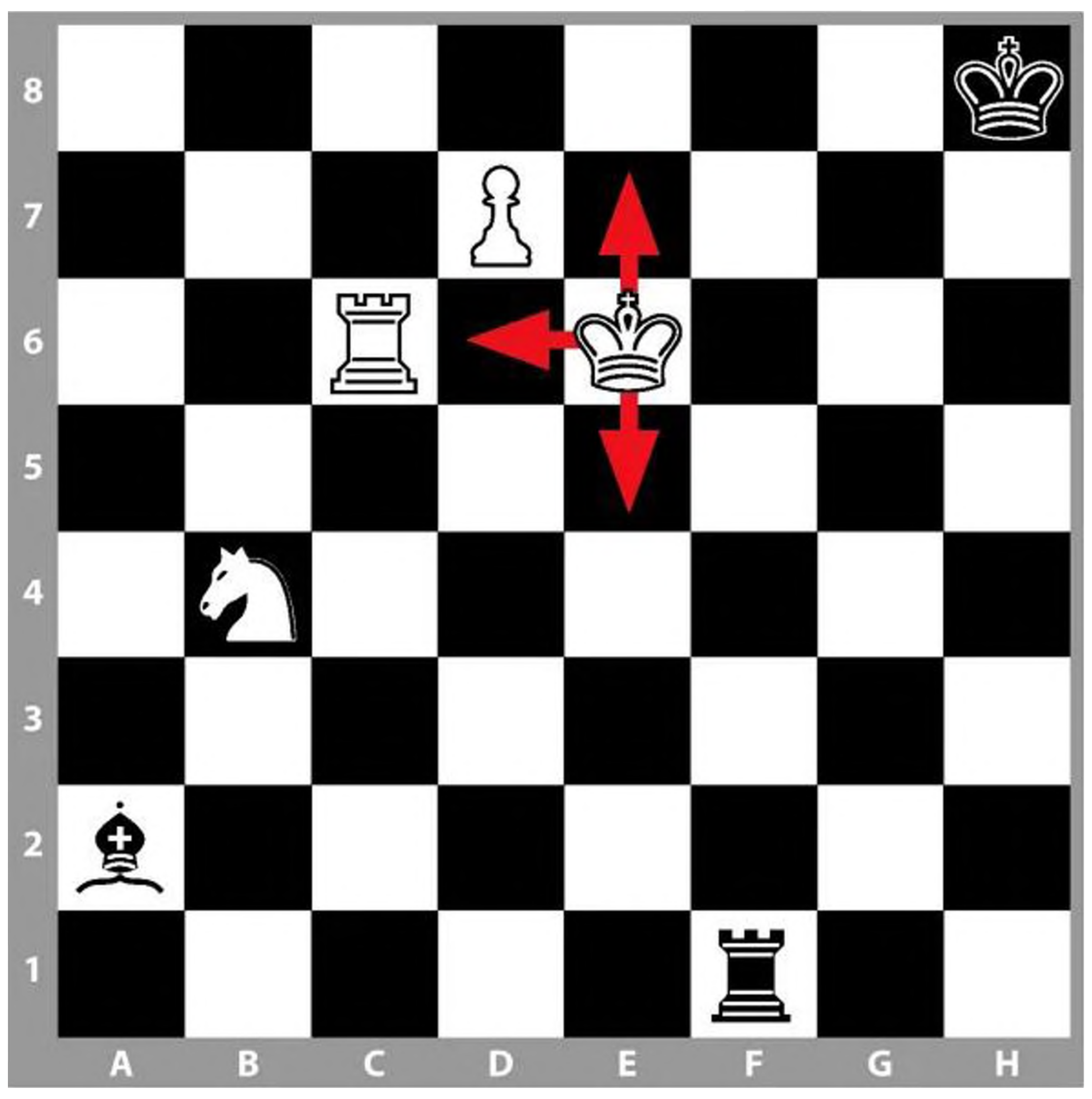
2: Moving the king

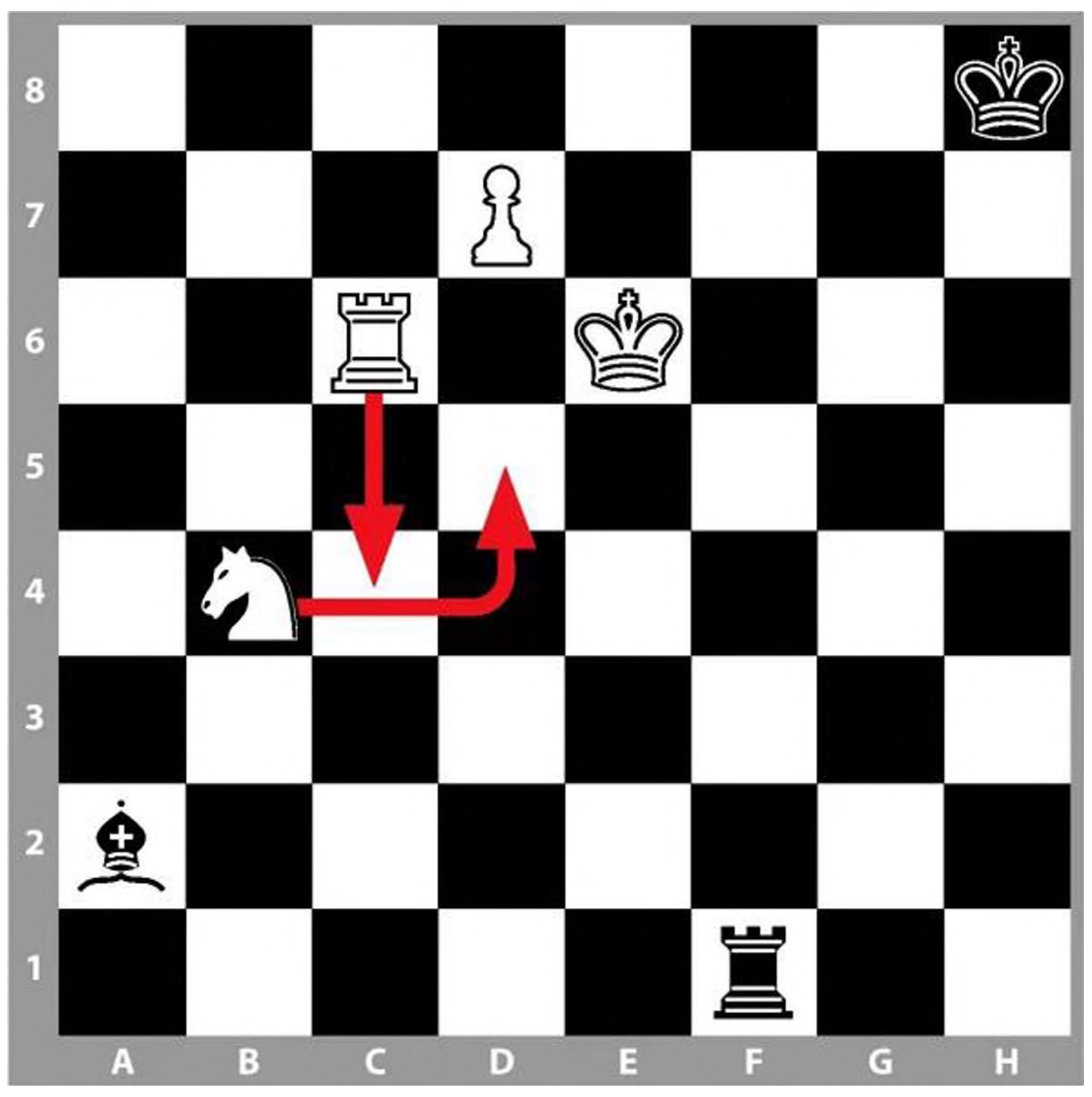
Perhaps the most common way of getting a king out of a check position is to move the king. Where the king is in check here from the black bishop, it can be moved to the indicated positions so as not to be in check.

3: Blocking the check

Blocking only works if the checking piece is a queen, rook or bishop and there is at least one empty square in the line between it and the king. In this instance the check can be blocked by the rook to c4 or the knight to d5.



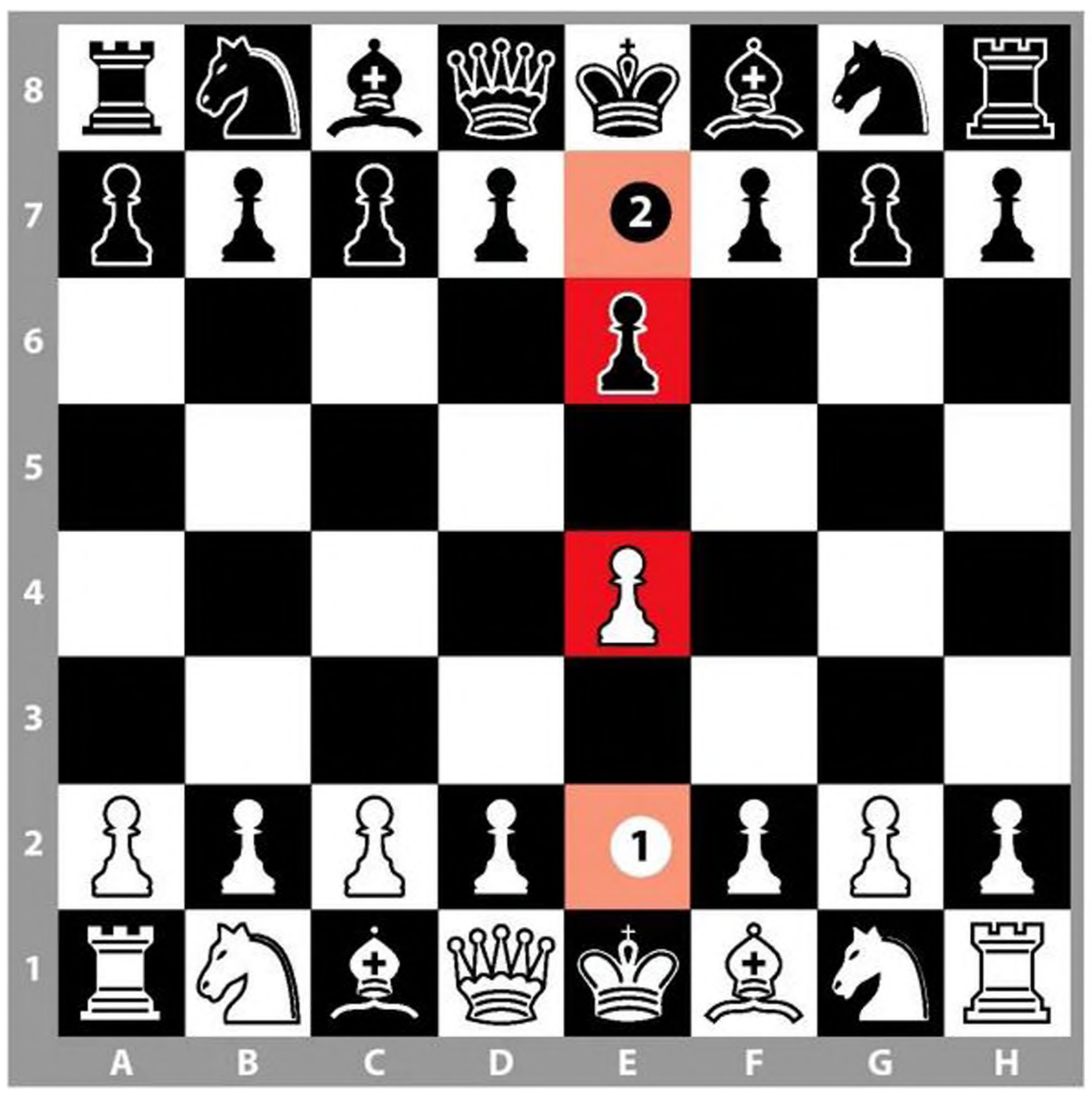




Signalling your intent

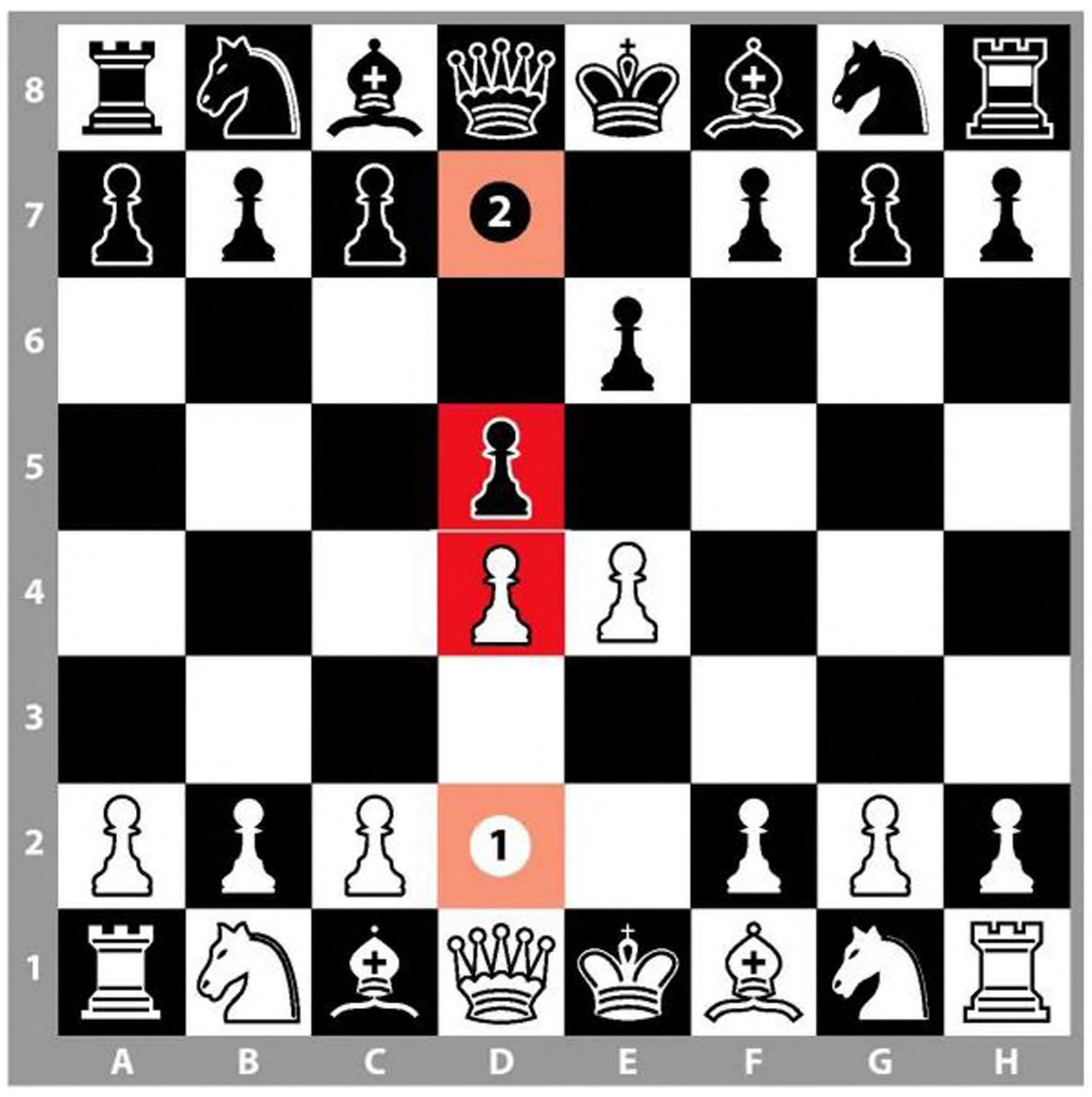
What is the best first move?

It is hard to define the 'best' first move as different openings lead to different positions, but many believe that the opening period is the most crucial time in the game and can determine the winner. The key word when starting a game of chess is 'development' – if you can develop more pieces in the opening than your opponent, then you control the middlegame and subsequently the endgame, thereby increasing your chances of winning with a checkmate. In what is referred to as the French Defence Winawer Variation, the opening move sees the white king pawn (the one in front of the king) move two spaces forward, which is the most common opening move playing in professional and amateur chess, and then the black king pawn move one space forward. Although this doesn't control the centre squares as e4 does, it can lead to numerous strong positions. One way of thinking is that subsequently the best ploy by the white player is to move to d4 on the second move and e5 on the third move and go for a space advantage and an attack on the king. Let's see how this can progress in more detail.



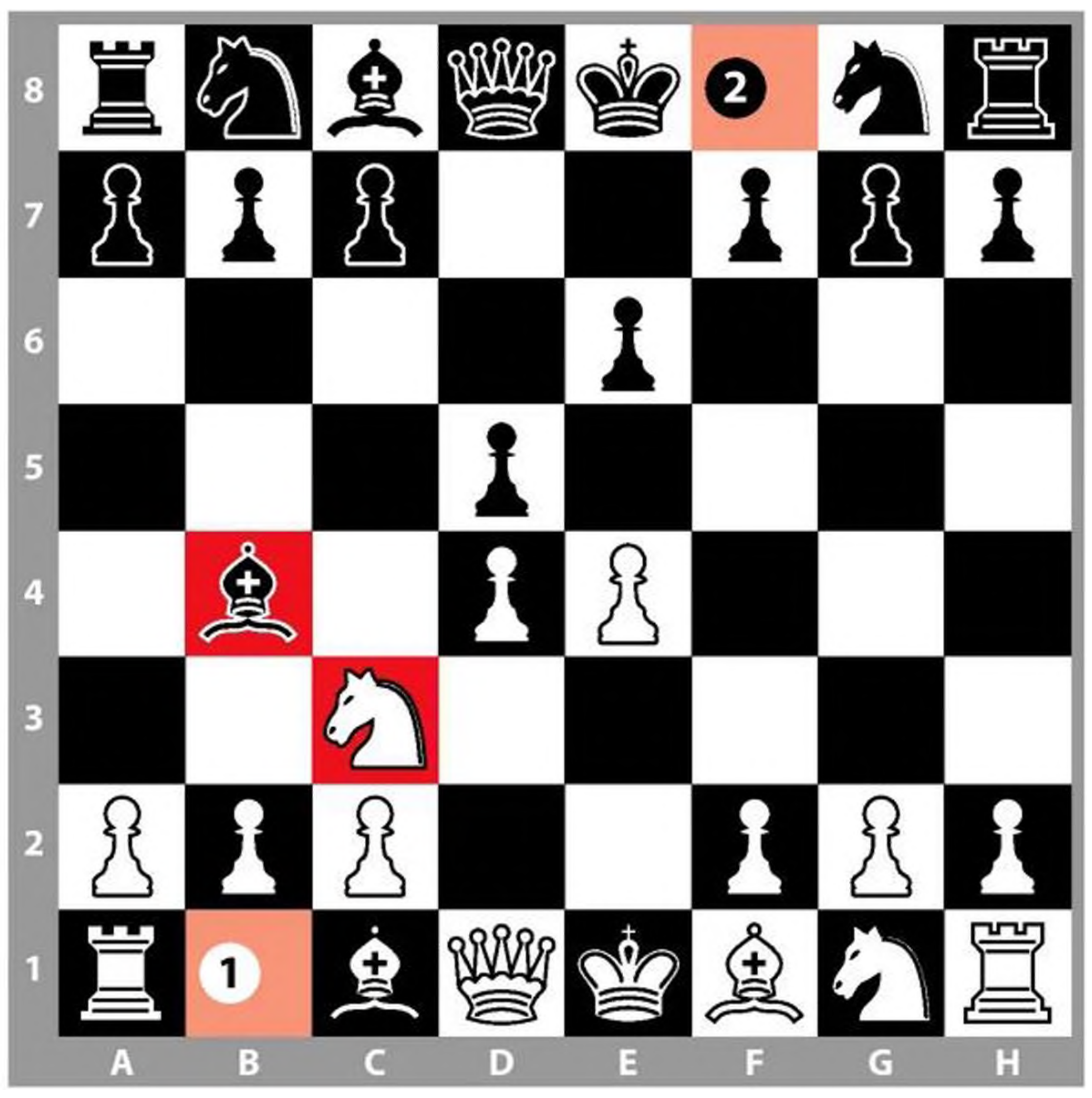
1: The opening

Here we can see that the white king pawn(1) moves two spaces forward to e4 while black moves its king pawn(2) to e6. Subsequently, the best ploy by white is to go to d4 on the second move and e5 on the third, to go for a space advantage and an attack on the king.



2: Pawn chain

As mentioned, moving the white queen pawn(1) forward two spaces to d4 now completely dominates the centre squares of the board and if the black king pawn(2) now moves forward two spaces to d5, it forms a strong pawn chain (you take mine, I'll take yours).



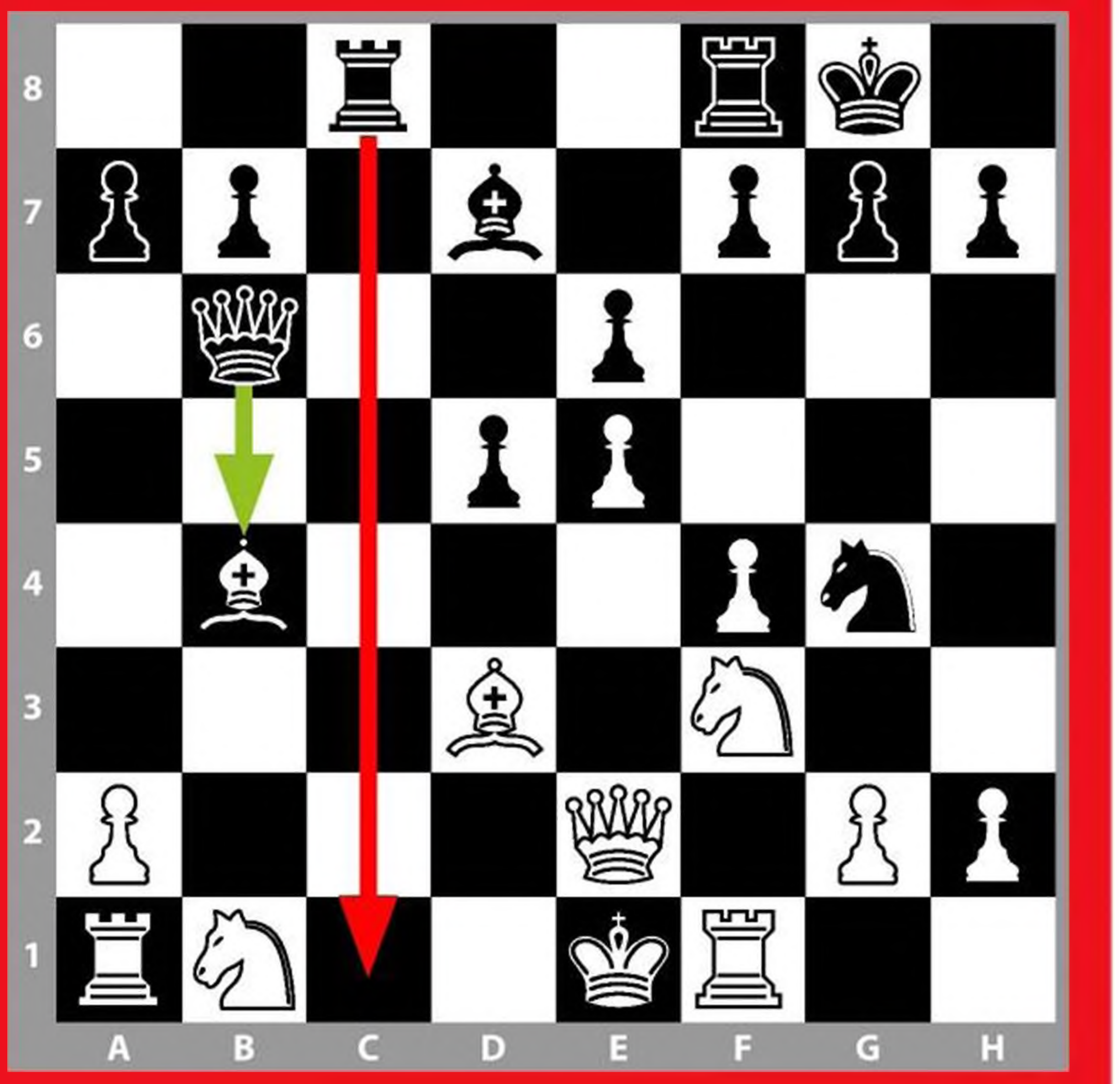
3: King pin

A logical move now is for the white knight(1) to move to c3 since it can cover the pawn on e4 from there. However, black can move the bishop(2) to b4, successfully pinning the white knight to the king. This move allows development of another piece while restricting white's movement.

An unexpected move

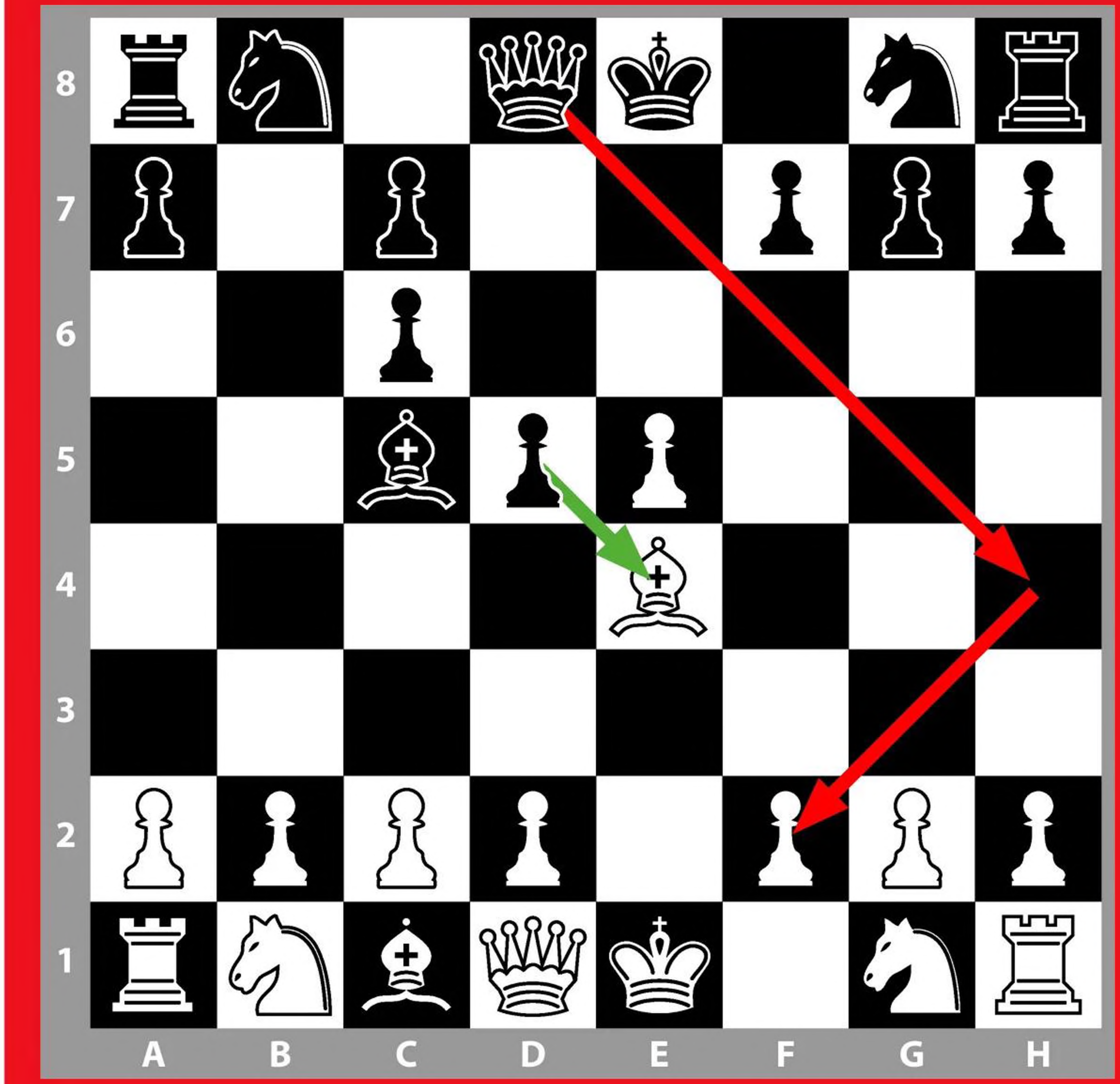
What is a zwischenzug?

The German word zwischenzug means 'intermediate move' ('zwischen' means between and 'zug' means move) and is applied to chess when someone does the unexpected. For example, if a player makes a move that threatens or captures one of your pieces, instead of countering with an obvious like-for-like move (such as taking the piece that took your piece), you follow up with something even more devastating that your opponent won't be expecting. And then, as your opponent deals with that move, you follow up with the original, expected move. Often the 'zwischenzug' move will be a direct attack on your opponent's king or queen and they, in turn, will be forced to deal with this threat, perhaps opening up better attacking possibilities for the zwischenzug-ing player. Your opponent is just as likely to use this tactic, though, and so it is good practice to think one or two moves ahead to ascertain if there is a chance that your king or queen could come under threat as a consequence of one of your earlier moves.



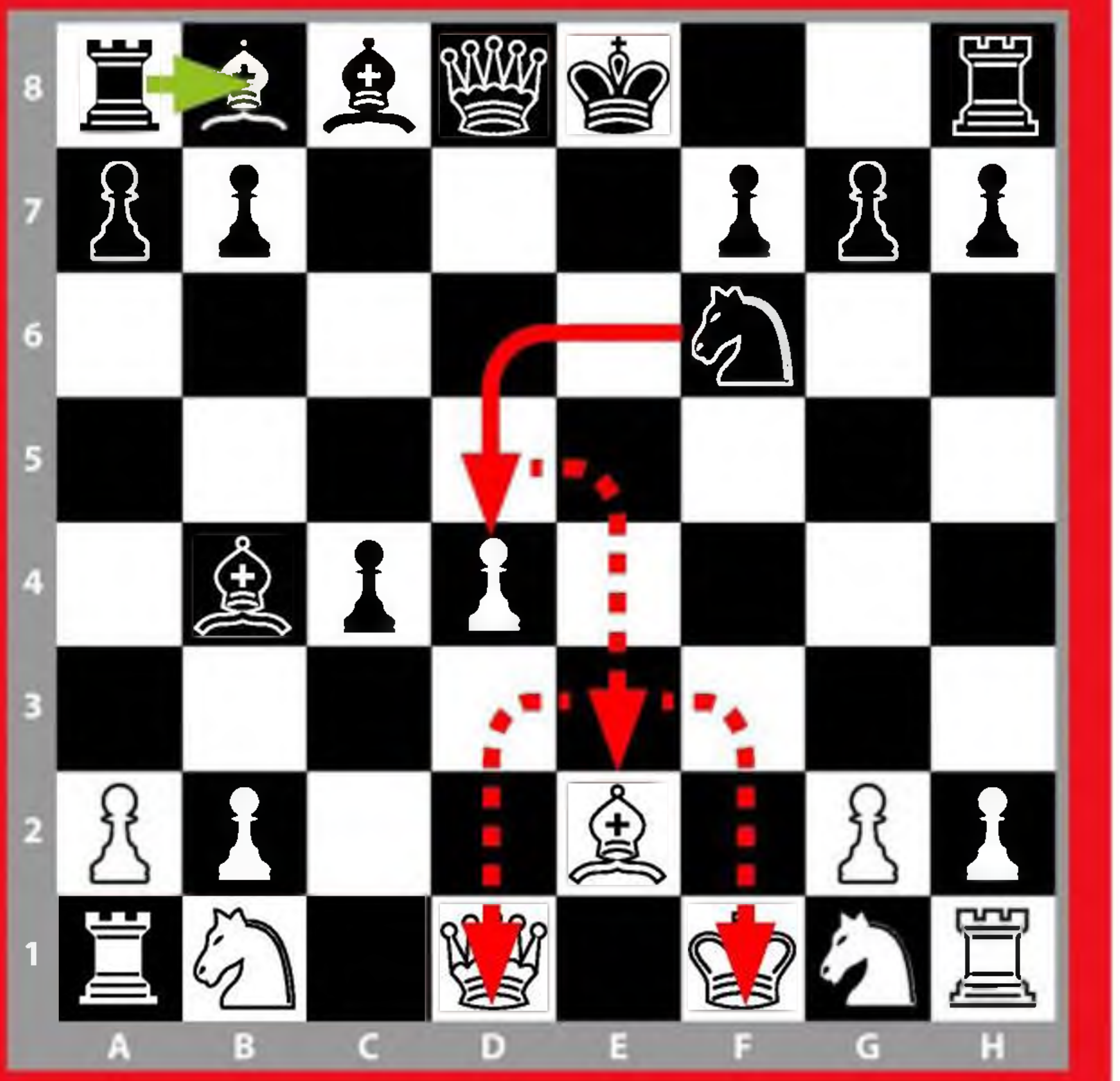
2: Zwischenzug #2

The expected move is for the black queen at b6 to capture the white bishop at b4, checking the white king at e1 in the process. However, the rook at c8 moves to c1 to attack the king before the queen at b6 captures the white bishop at b4.



1: Zwischenzug #1

The expected move is for the black pawn on d5 to capture white's bishop at e4. However, the black queen at d8 instead moves to h4 so that it pins the white pawn at f2 to stop it from advancing and also threatens the bishop at e4.



3: Zwischenzug #3

The expected move is for the black rook at a8 to capture the white bishop on b8. However, the knight at f6 moves to d5, a more threatening and advanced position on the board, before capturing the white bishop on b8 with the rook at a8.

Your chess glossary

Here we explain the meanings behind some of the more common terms that you will come across while playing chess

A

Absolute Pin

This is when the king is pinned and cannot legally move (as doing so would expose it to check).

Active

This describes a piece that controls a number of squares, or a piece that has a number of squares available to move into.

B

Backward Pawn

This is a pawn that is in the space behind a pawn of the same colour and which can't be advanced or supported by another pawn.

Bad Bishop

A bishop that is blocked in by the player's own pawns.

Bare King

This describes the situation when the king is the only piece of its colour left on the board.

Bishop

Each player begins a game of chess with two bishop pieces and they can move and take diagonally over any number of spaces.

Blitz Chess

This is a game in which all the moves must be made within a set time of three to five minutes (or certainly no more than 15) by each player.

Blockade

This describes the obstruction of an enemy pawn by placing a piece in front of it so that it is unable to move.

C

Castling

This is the only move in chess where two pieces – the king and the rook – can move simultaneously past each other. The purpose is generally to protect the king and develop the rook. Castling on the kingside is referred to as 'short castling' and castling on the queenside is referred to as 'long castling'; the difference determines whether the rook moves two squares or three.

Check

This is called when there is a direct attack on your opponent's king. The king that is under threat is said to be in check.

Checkmate

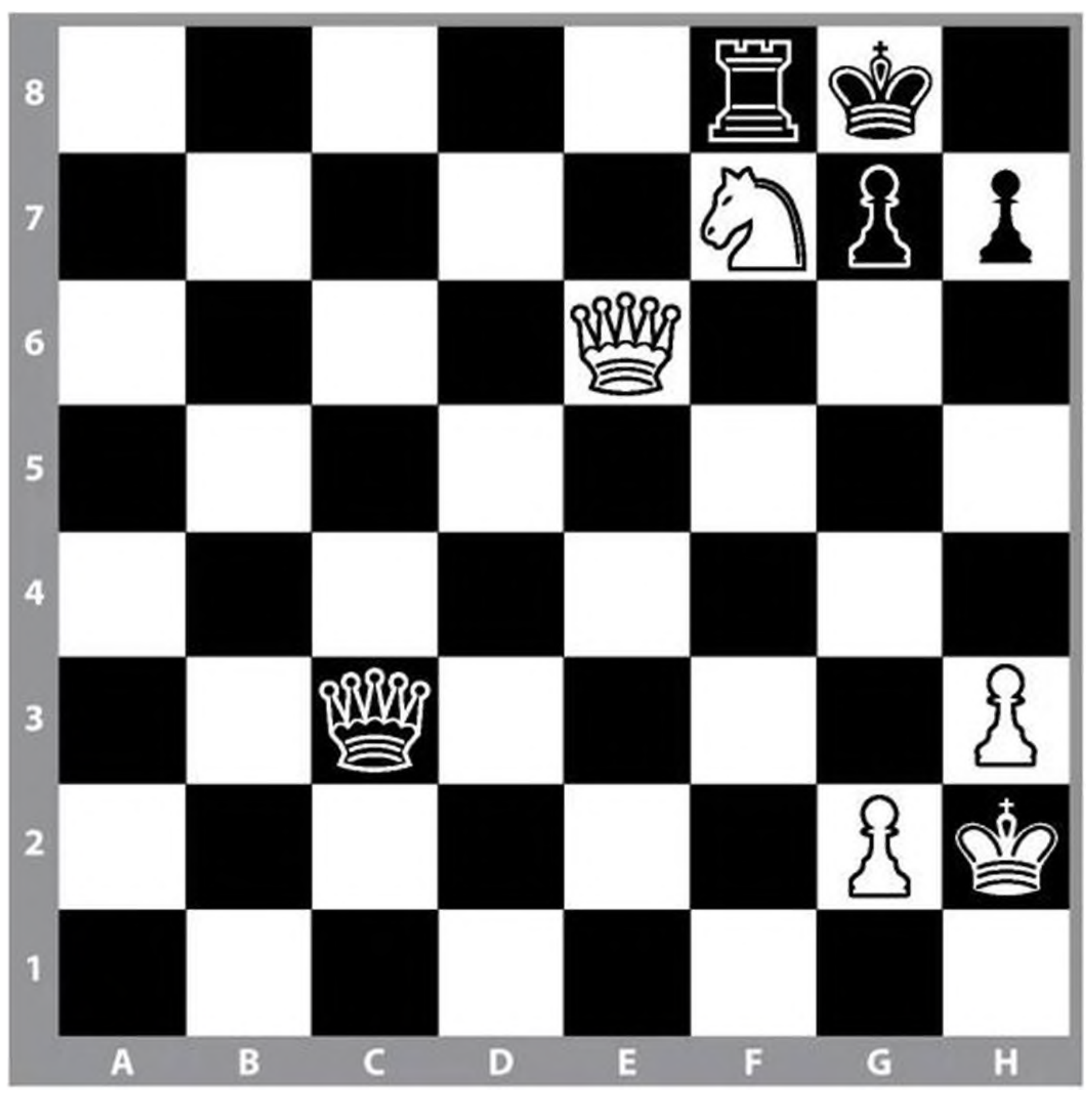
This signals the end of the game since it means that your opponent's king is in check and they have no legal moves available to escape the check. The player whose king is checkmated loses the game.

Chess Clocks

Two adjacent clocks control the timing of chess games and separately show the time taken by each player to make their moves. After moving, the player hits a button, which simultaneously stops their clock and starts that of their opponent.

Combination

This refers to a sequence of moves to gain the advantage. The moves of the opponent are usually forced and the term 'combination' means that your opponent isn't given many possible lines of continuation. In the diagram the white player wins with knight to h6(1) (black king(2) to h8), queen(3) to g8 (black rook(4) takes the queen on g8) and knight(5) to f7.



Correspondence Chess

A form of chess in which the moves are sent by mail. This used to be popular in the early-mid 20th Century and remote areas.

Counter-Attack

This describes when a player defends by attacking their opponent instead of making defensive moves; for example, when players castle on opposite wings and both attack each other's king without defending.

D

Defence

This can refer to an opening move played by a black piece, or a move or series of moves taken to protect a piece or position that is under attack.

Development

When a game of chess begins, this refers to the act of moving a piece from its original square to make it more active on the board and therefore developing further across the board to the other side.

Discovered Check

This is a discovered attack on a king that occurs when a player moves a piece, resulting in another piece putting their opponent's king in check along a line previously obstructed by the piece that was moved.

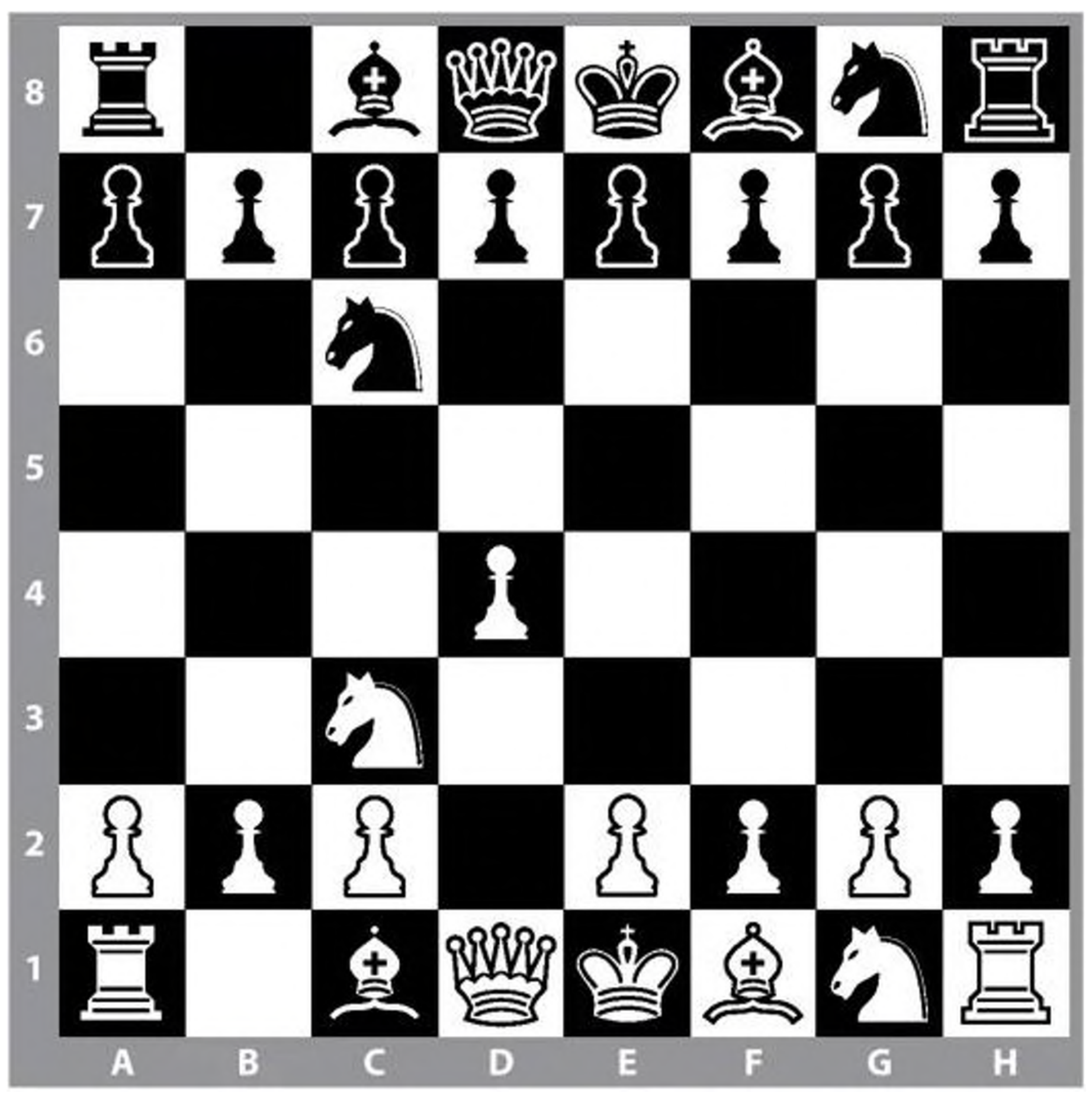
E

Endgame

This refers to the stage of the game in which there are only a few pieces left on the board.

En Passant

This is a French term meaning 'in passing' that allows a pawn that has just advanced two squares to be captured by an enemy pawn that is on the same rank and adjacent file (next to it). The pawn can be taken as if it had only advanced one square.



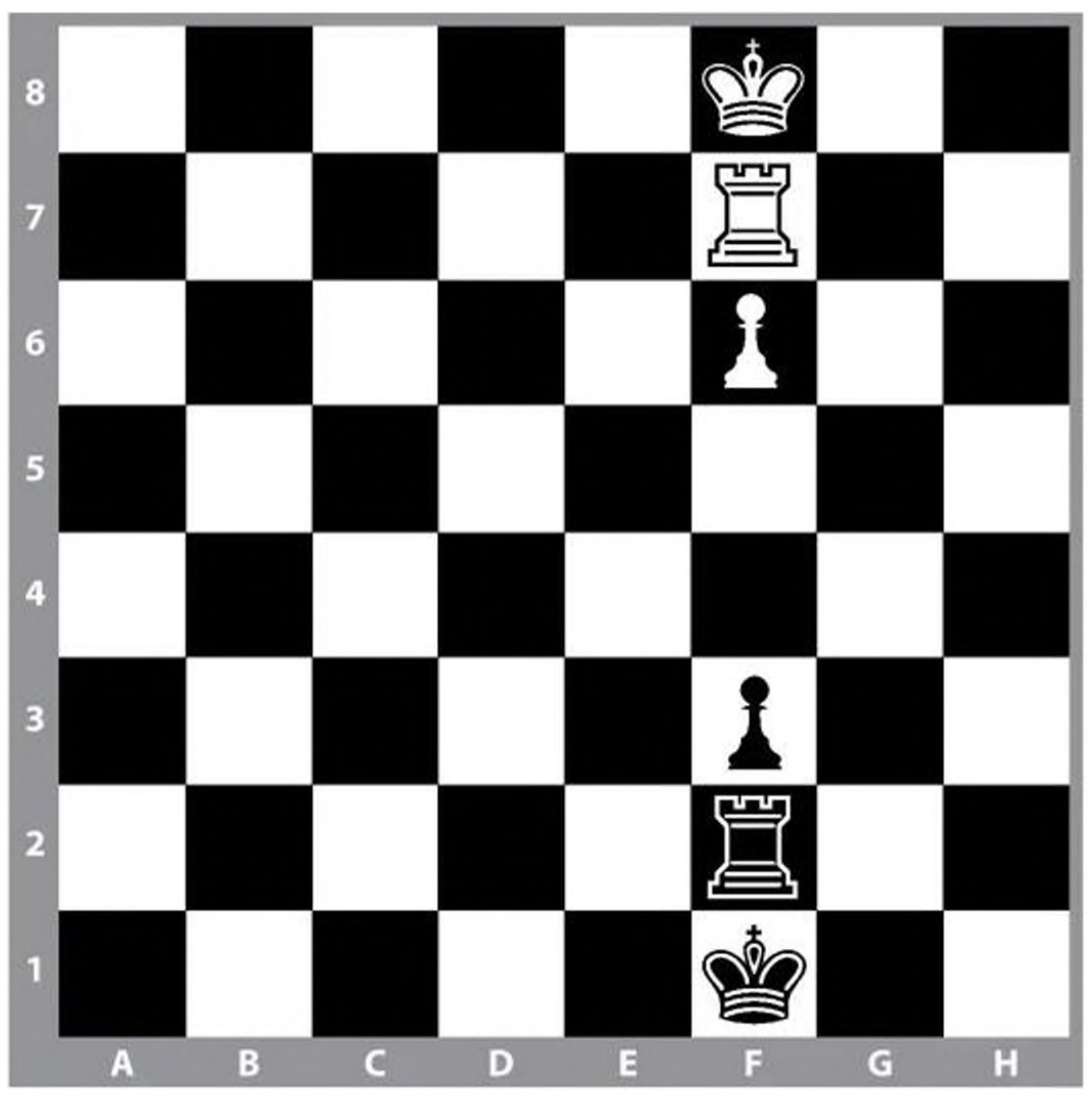
En Prise

This is French for 'in a position to be taken' and describes a pawn or piece that is exposed to captured from an opponent and is undefended by another piece. In the diagram above, the pawn at d4 is said to be en prise.

F

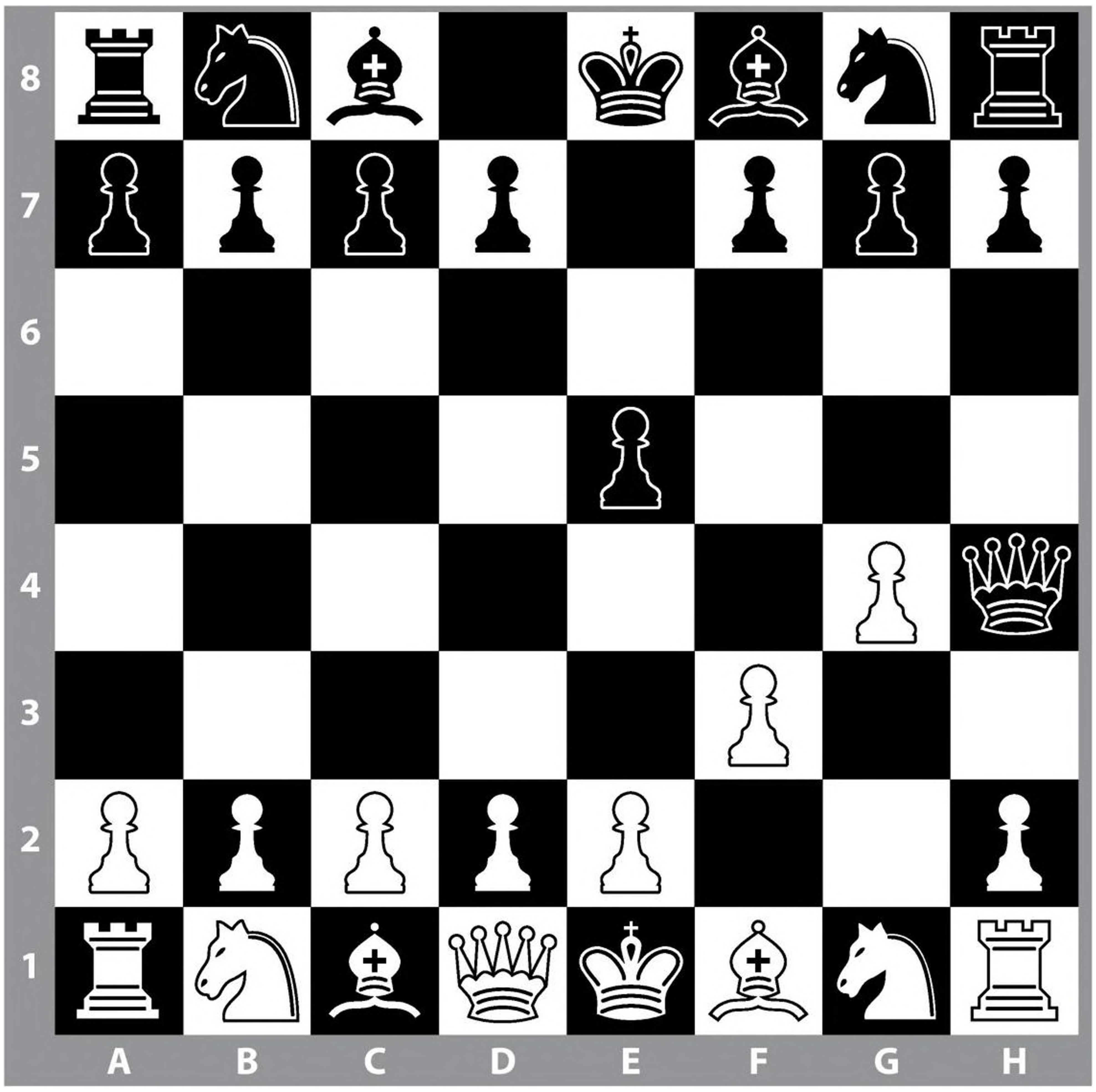
File

The eight vertical columns on a board (a to h) are the files. In the diagram below, all of the pieces occupy the f file.



Fool's Mate

This is the shortest possible checkmate scenario, as the diagram here demonstrates. The white pawn on f2 advances to f3, the black pawn at e7 advances to e5, the white pawn at g2 advances to g4 and the black queen advances to h4.



Reference

G

Gambit
This refers to a sacrifice (usually of a pawn) used to gain an early advantage in space (or time) during the opening of a chess game.

Grading
This is a number which indicates how likely one player is to beat another. A competitive ranking list is based and compiled solely on results.

I

Initiative
This describes the advantage that a player who is making threatening moves has over their opponent, who must respond to them. The attacking player is said to 'have the initiative' and can often dictate the turn of play.

K

Key Square
This refers to an important square and/or a square that when occupied by one side's king guarantees the achievement of a particular goal.

King
A king is the most important piece in a game of chess. The object of the game is to attack the opponent's king (check) so that it is impossible to escape (checkmate). A king can move and take pieces one space in any direction.

Knight
Each player starts with two knights in a game of chess and they can move two squares horizontally and one space vertically or two spaces vertically and one to the side.

L

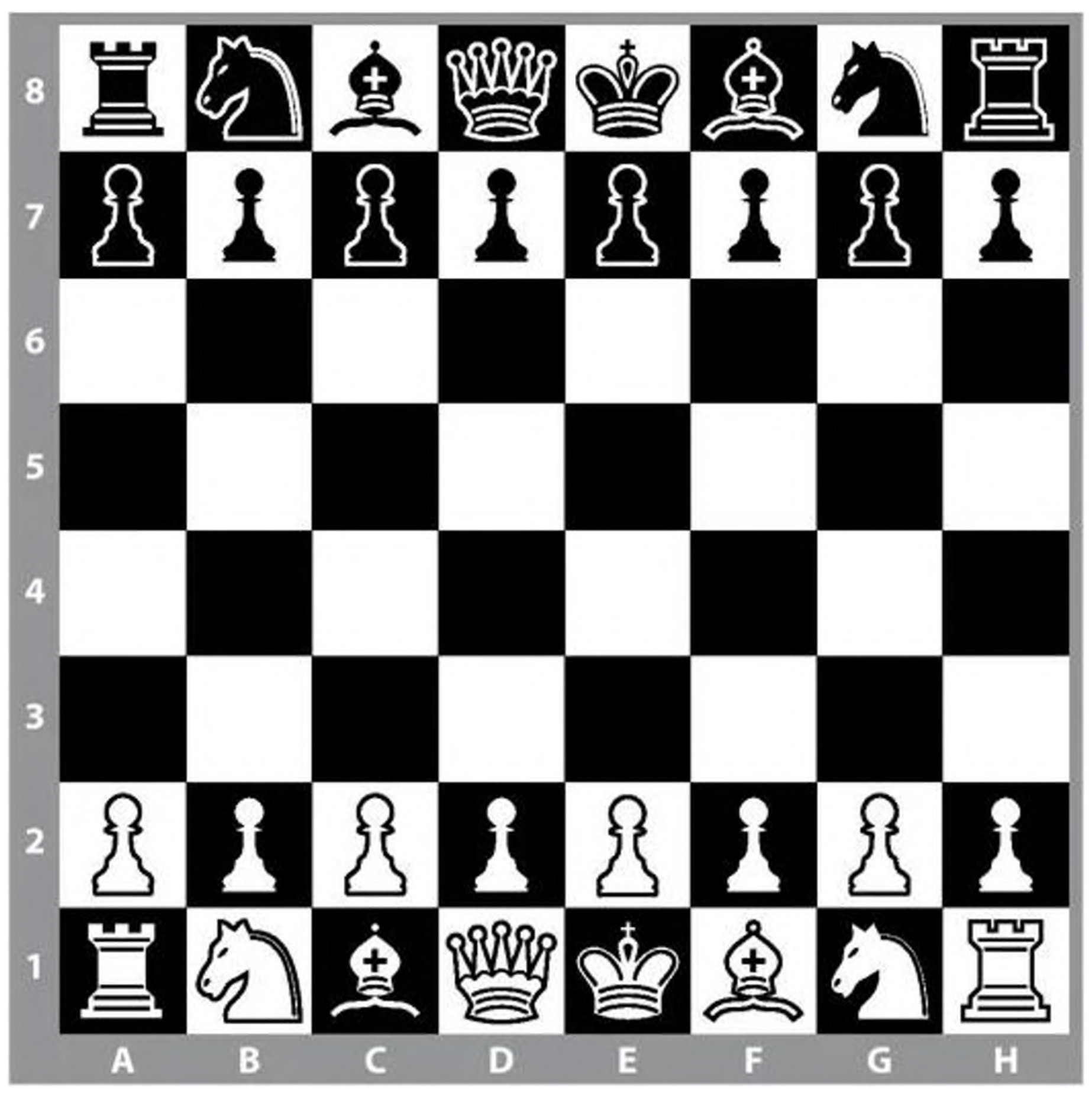
Living Chess
This is a game of chess played with human beings as pieces on a giant chessboard, a spectacle that has been performed since the 15th Century.

M

Middlegame
This refers to a period of the game that follows the opening, where strategies are formed based on the position and put into action.

N

Notation
This refers to the method of writing down chess moves. The board is read from a8 to h8 and then left by right by rank from the black side to the white side. The result is then written down by hand, with numbers for blank squares. When writing notations, capital letters are used for white pieces and lower-case letters are used for black pieces, so the starting positions on a chessboard would be written as: rnbqkbnr/pppppppp/8/8/8/8/PPPPPPPP/RNBQKBNR



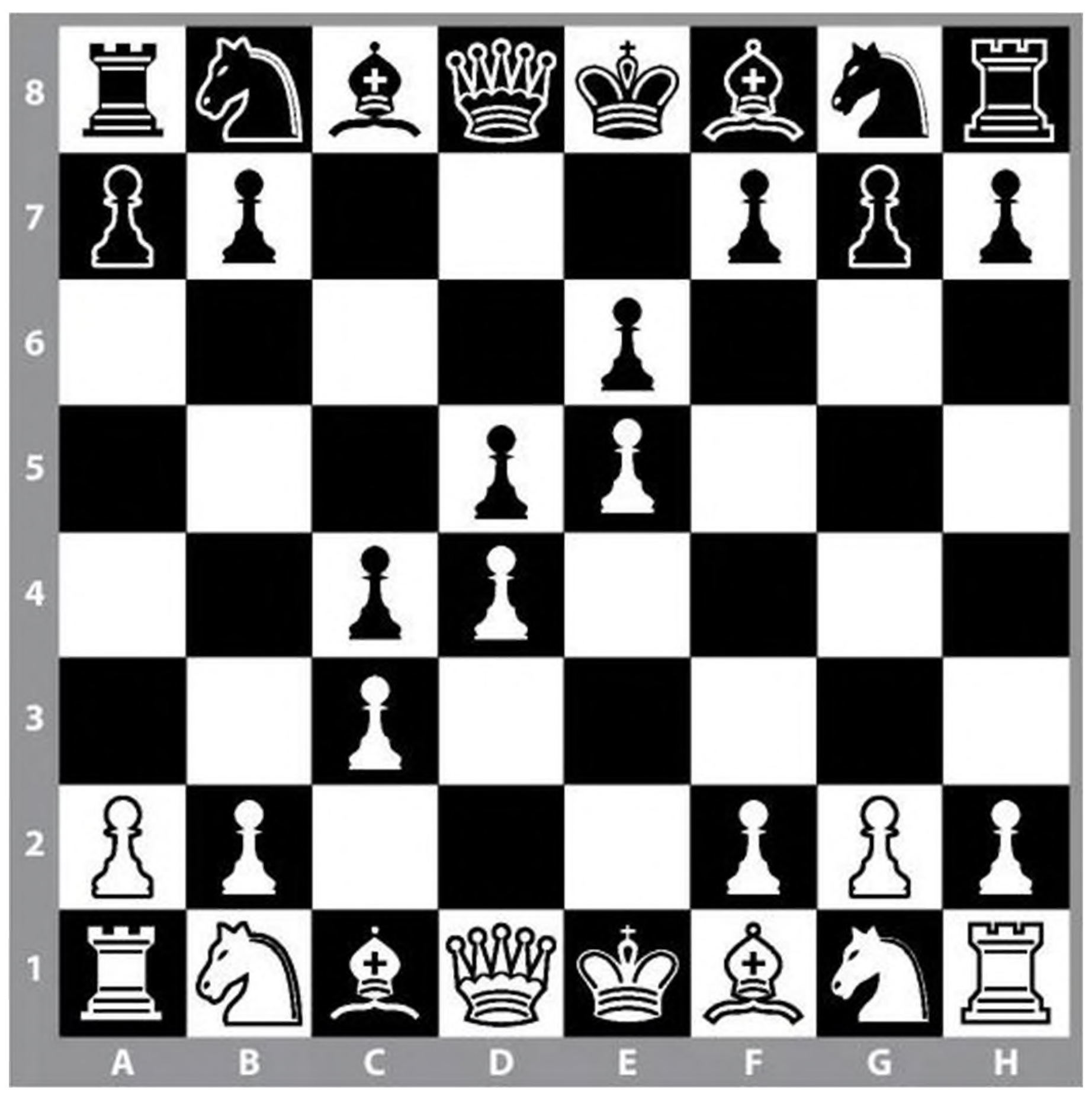
O

Opening
This refers to a period at the start of the game for the first 12 or so moves. Traditionally, the opening ends (and goes into the middlegame) when minor pieces such as knights and bishops have been developed (moved out of their starting positions).

P

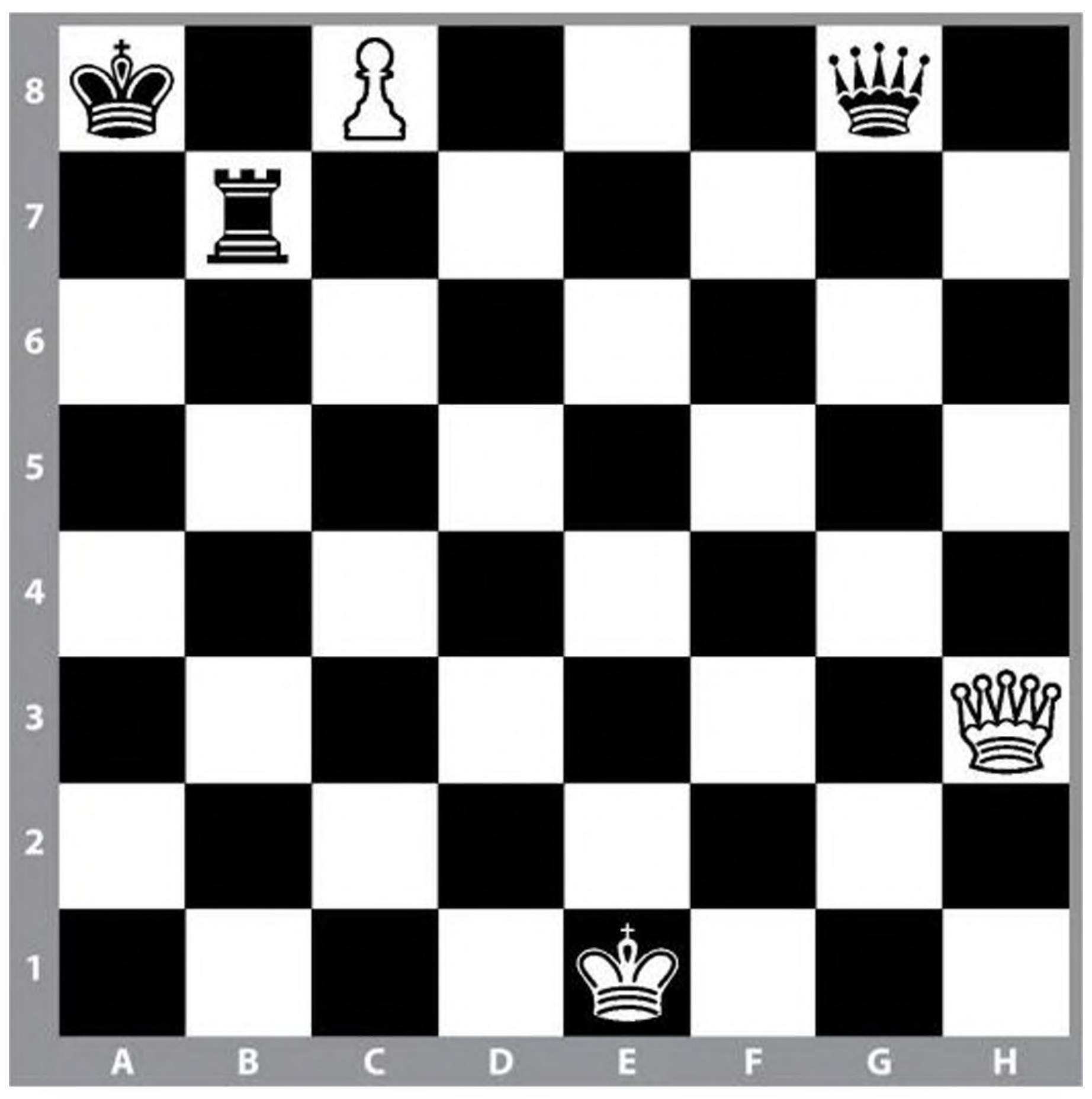
Pawn
A pawn is the weakest, yet most numerous piece in a chess game and historically represents the infantry of an army. Each player begins with eight pawns, one on each square in front of the other pieces. During the opening, a pawn can move directly forward one or two square in its first move (and only one square thereafter). Uniquely among the pieces, it has a different capture movement: it takes other pieces diagonally forward one space. While they are the lowest-value pieces, pawns can prove very useful in a game.

Pawn Chain
This is a locked diagonal formation of pawns that is supported by a pawn of the same colour diagonally behind and blocked by an enemy pawn directly ahead. The following diagram illustrates this formation.



Pin
This is a term used when a piece does not move because to do so would expose a more valuable piece to capture. It is therefore 'pinned' to its position.

Promotion
This is what happens when a pawn reaches the eighth rank (the far side of the chessboard). When this happens, the pawn can be exchanged for a more valuable piece of the same colour – usually a queen but sometimes a rook, bishop or knight.



Q

Queen

The queen is the most powerful piece in a game of chess since it can move any number of squares vertically, horizontally or diagonally – and capture anything in its path.

R

Rank

This refers to the eight horizontal rows on a chessboard, which are labelled from 1 to 8, starting from the white side of the board.

Rook

Each player starts the game with two rooks, one in each of the corner squares on their side of the board, and they can move any number of squares horizontally or vertically.

S

Sacrifice

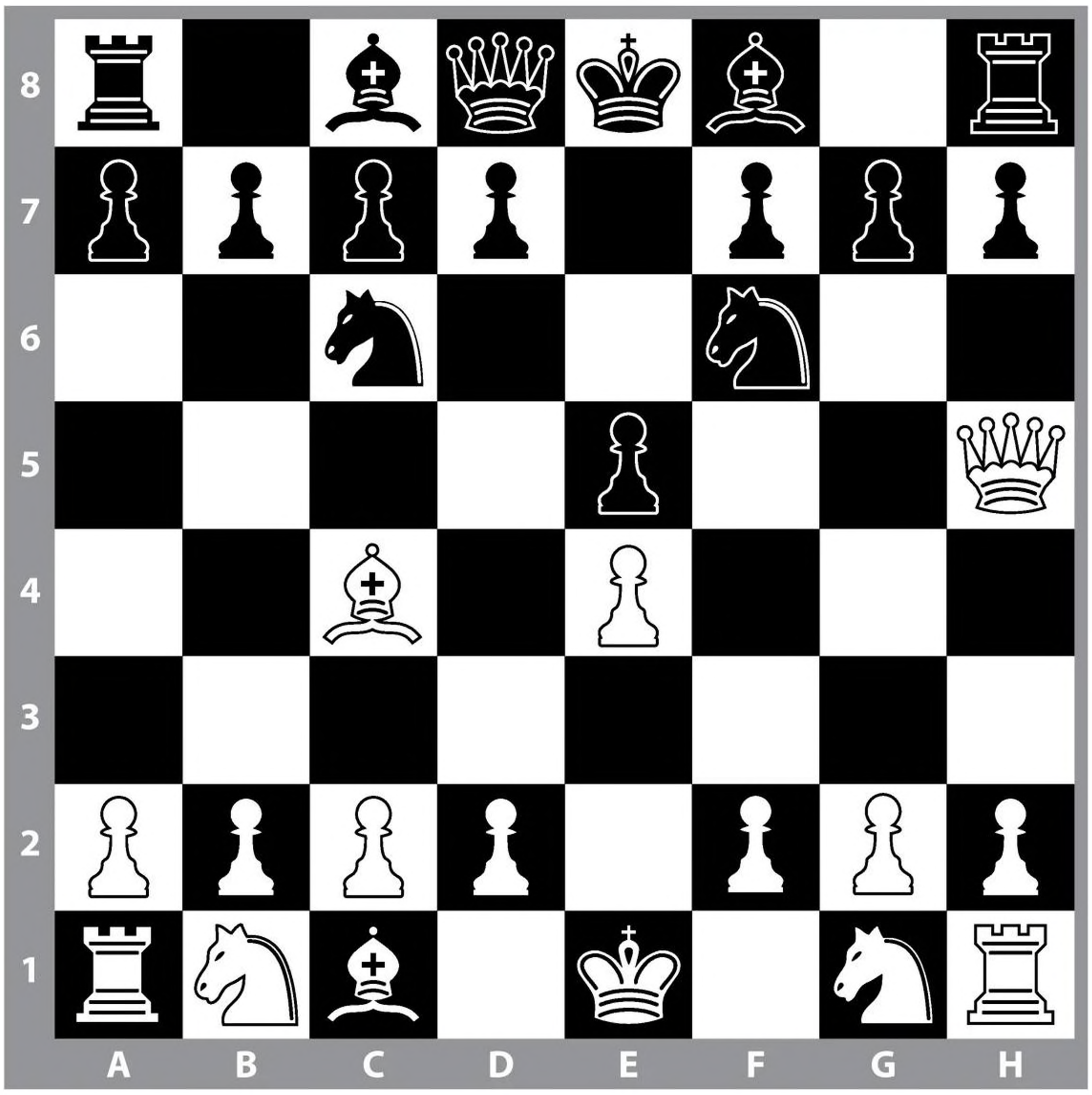
This refers to the intentional loss of a piece in order to gain a more important advantage (and often forms the start of a combination).

Stalemate

This is a situation in a game of chess when the player whose turn it is to move has no legal moves and their king is not in check. A stalemate results in an immediate draw.

Scholar's Mate

This is a four-move checkmate scenario, as demonstrated on the following diagram. The move starts with the white pawn on e2 advancing to e4, followed by the white queen advancing to h5 and the white bishop advancing to c4, and ends with the queen taking the black pawn on f7 and checkmating.



T

Take

This refers to the act of capturing one of your opponent's pieces by landing your piece on the square that it occupies. It is then removed from the board.

Transposition

This is when you arrive at the same position from a different sequence of moves.

U

Undermining

This refers to a chess tactic whereby a defensive piece is captured, leaving one your opponent's pieces undefended.

Underpromotion

This is when a pawn reaches the far side of the board and, rather than a queen, the player chooses to promote it to a bishop, rook or knight.

Z

Zugzwang

This refers to when a player is put at a disadvantage by having to make a move.

Zwischenzug

This is an 'in between' move where a player, instead of playing the expected move, first performs a move which the opponent must answer, before then making the expected move.

Openings & Defences

When studying chess, you will come across many different openings and defences: sequences of moves. We look at some of the most common

Top tip

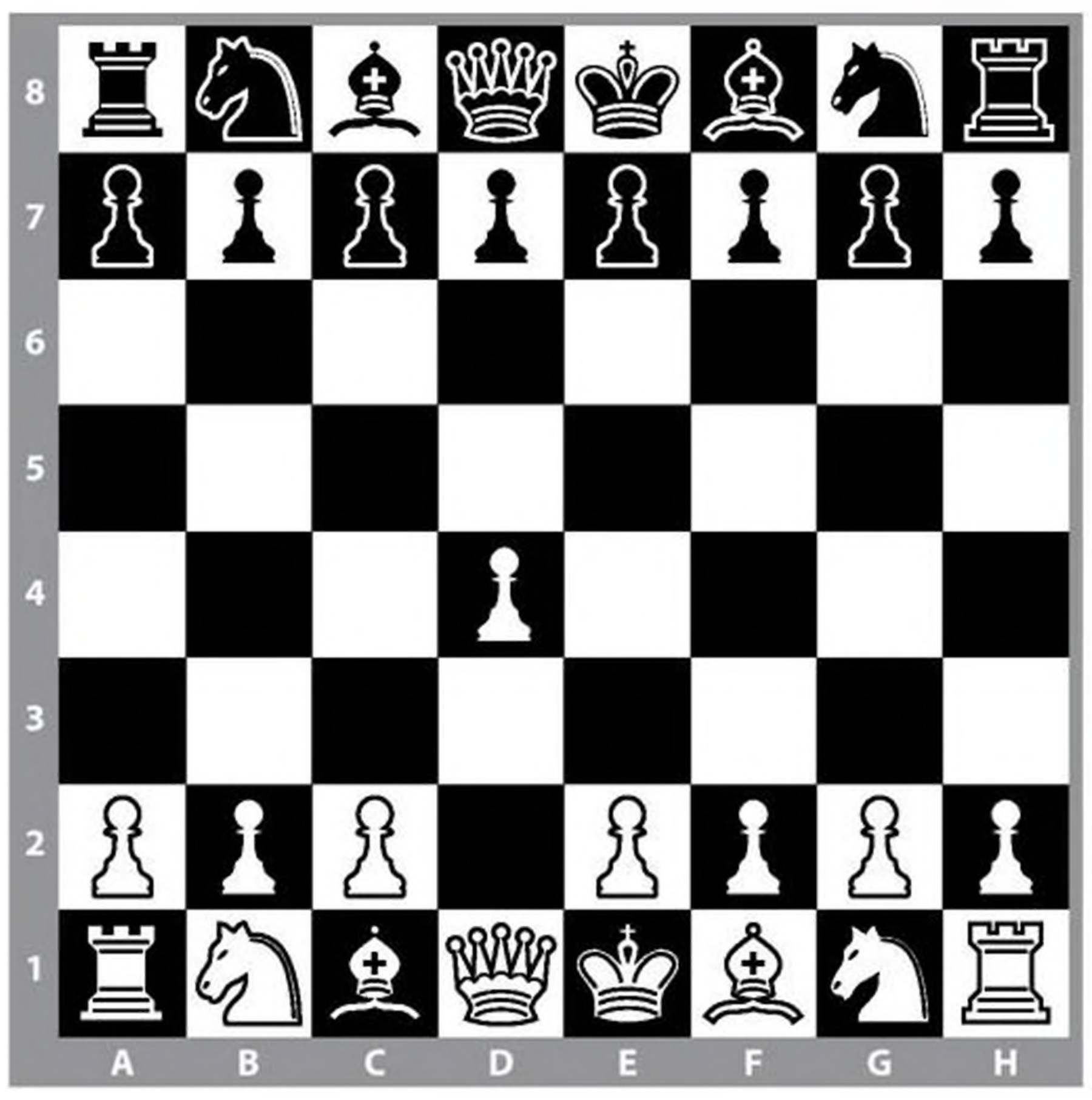
Chess notation

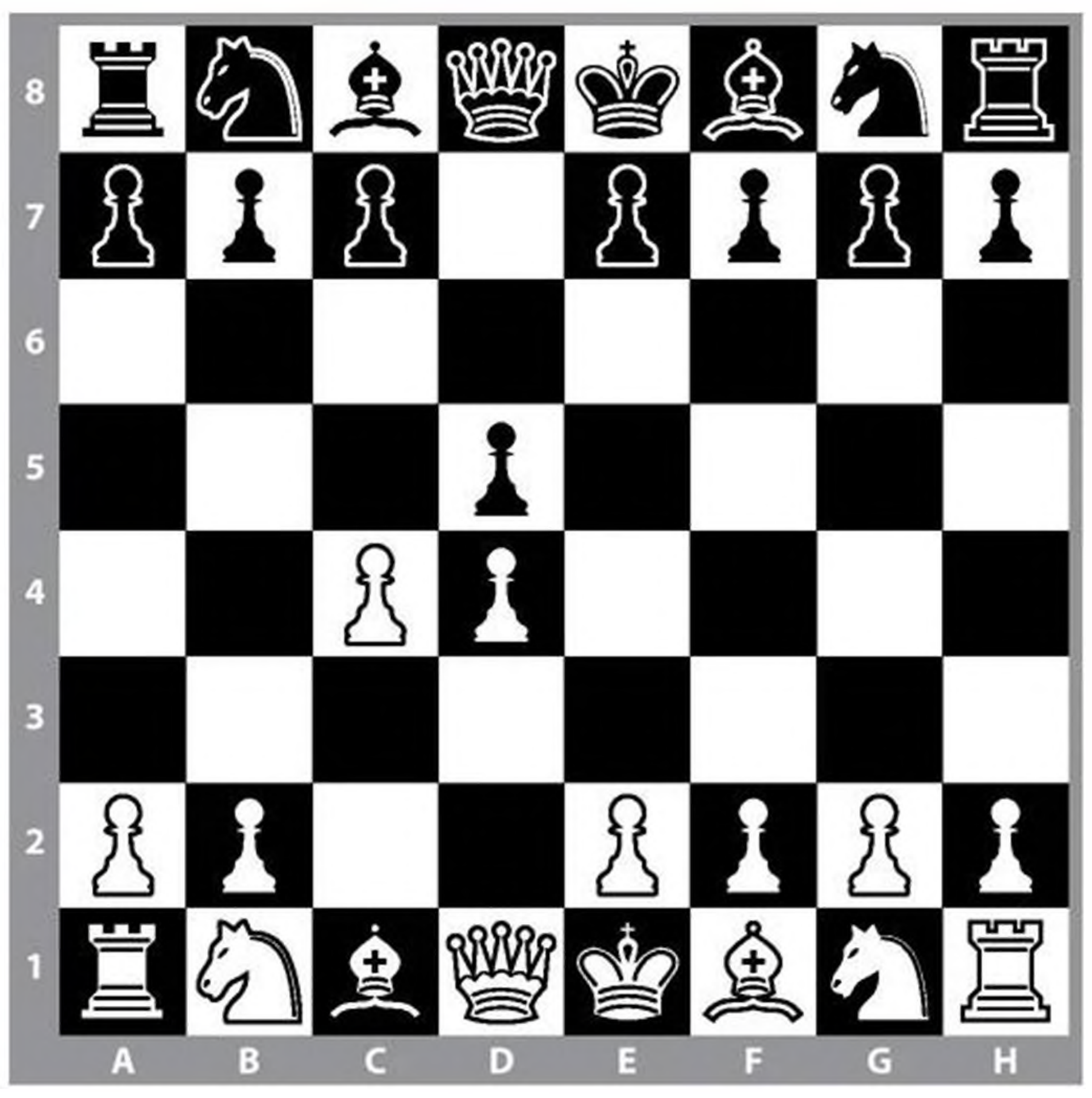
We have used standard chess notation. The white move is listed first, followed by black. The square being moved to is in lower case and the letter before it shows the piece (pawns have no letters), ie e4, is pawn to e4; Bb5 is bishop to b5.

Queen's Gambit

1. d4, d5 2. c4

The Queen's Gambit is one of the oldest chess openings, mentioned in writings from the 1490s. It wasn't particularly popular as a move back in those early days, but it did have a peak in the 1920s and 1930s. These days it is still a solid opener and many chess masters still use it on a regular basis. The aim of the move is for white to gain dominance over the centre of the board, moving two pawns into position and threatening the sole black pawn, making it quite an aggressive stance for the white player.

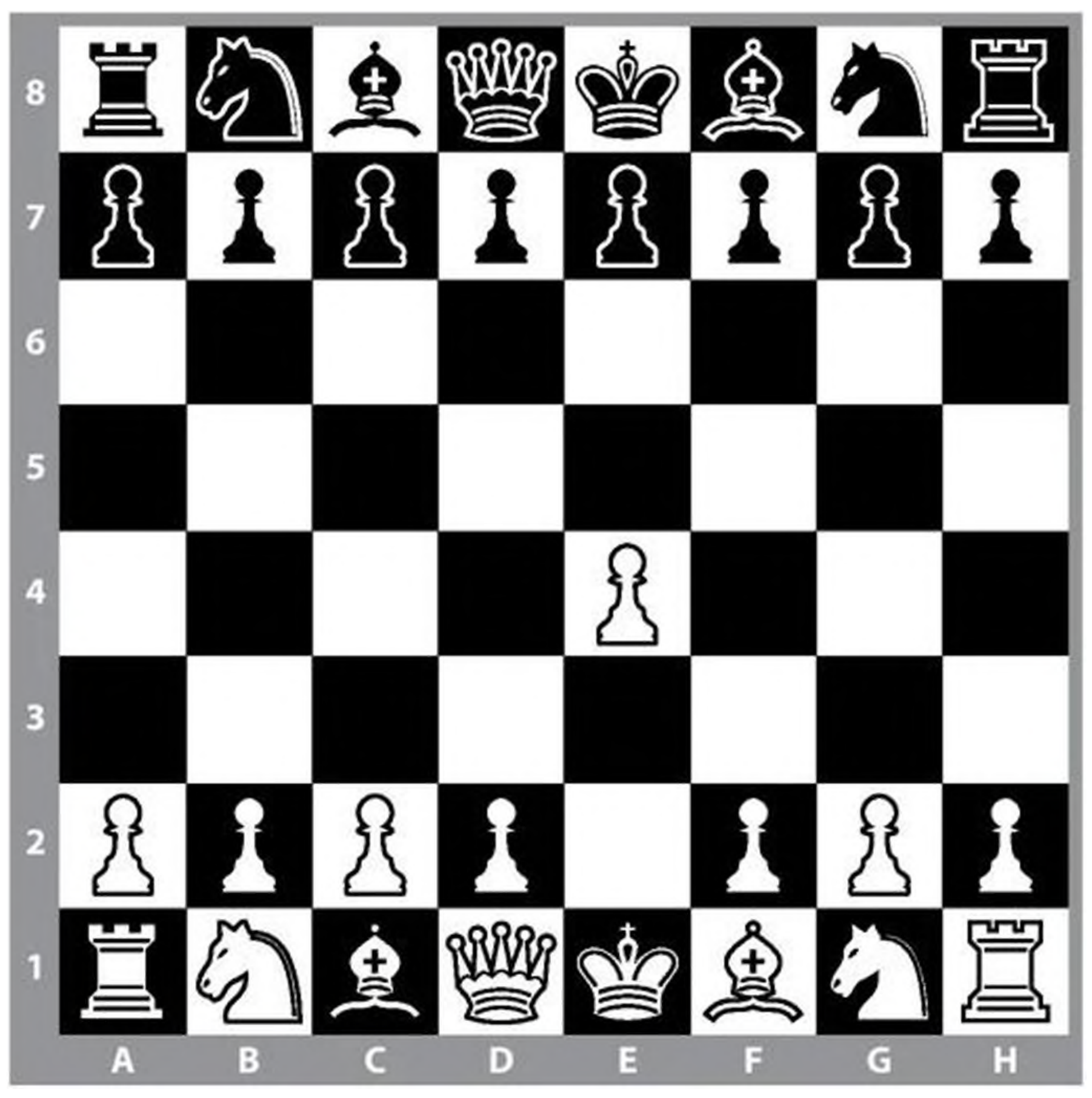




King's Pawn

1. e4

One of the most popular opening moves is white pawn to e4, which opens up a path for the bishop and queen to move, giving multiple options on how to proceed. It has a reasonable rate of success for white (54.25%), though there are other moves with a higher rate. Lots of openings will use this starting move. There are lots of popular continuations to this move, with the Sicilian Defence being one of the most commonly used (see below), though there are numerous variations to choose from.

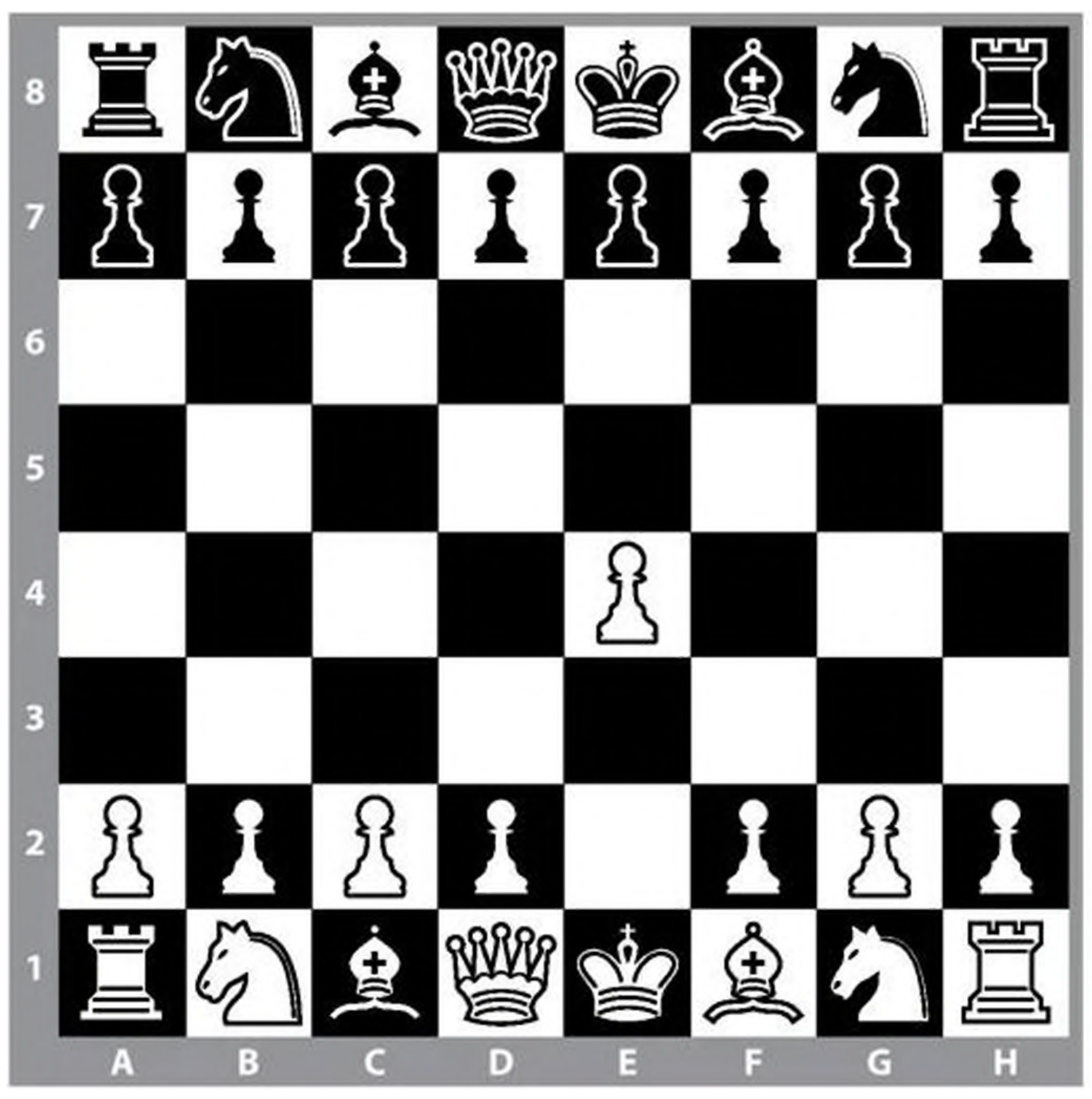


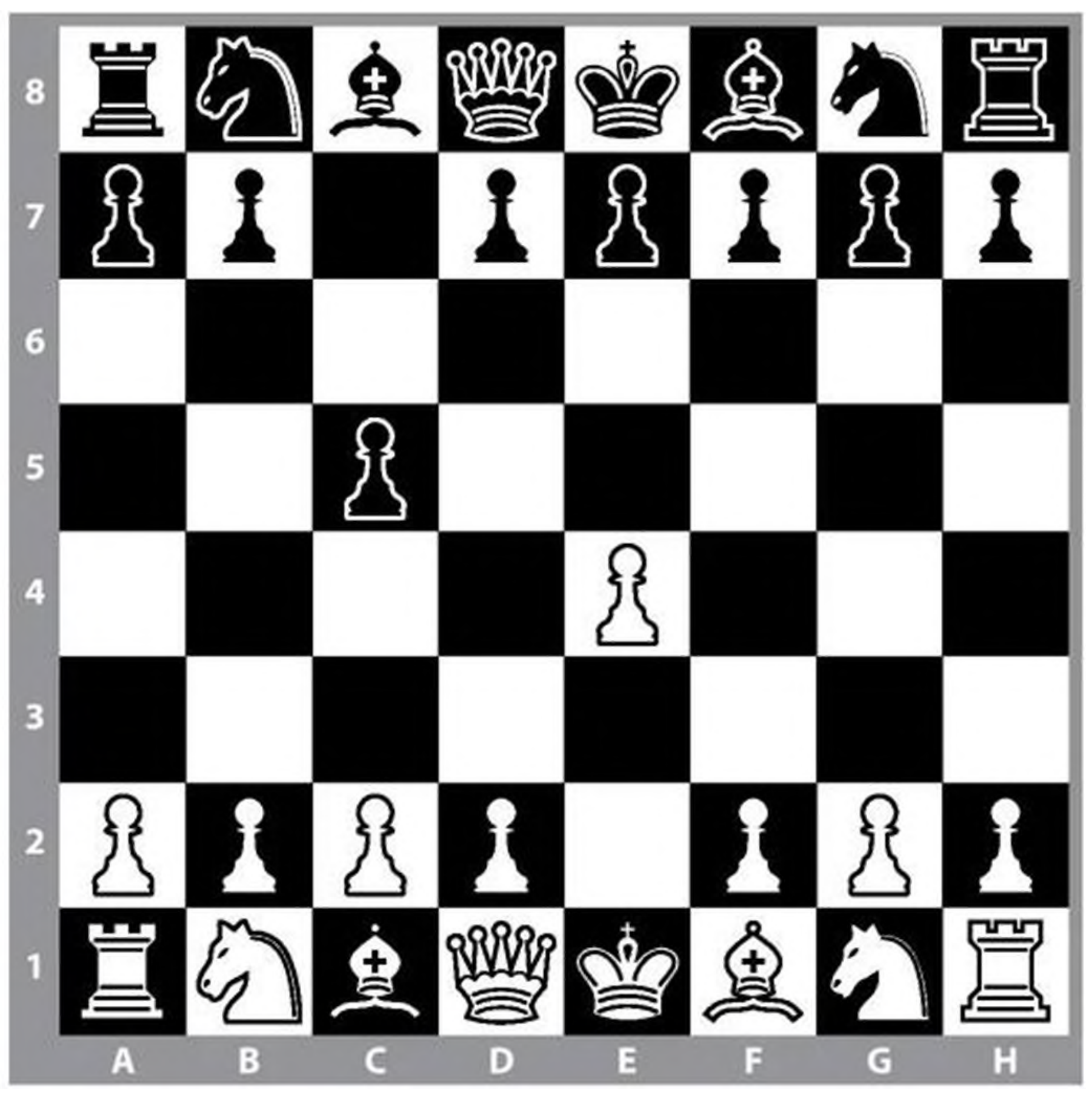
"Moving the white pawn to e4 opens up a path for the bishop and queen to move"

Sicilian Defence

1. e4, c5

When white opens with King's Pawn (e4), this is one of the most popular continuations and the one that's the most effective for black in terms of success rates. Black moves pawn to c5 to gain a hold on the centre of the board, which white has tried to claim, although it doesn't give black as many opportunities as white in terms of developing the other pieces and subsequent moves. Around a quarter of all games start with the Sicilian and it is still commonly seen in chess master tournaments and games.

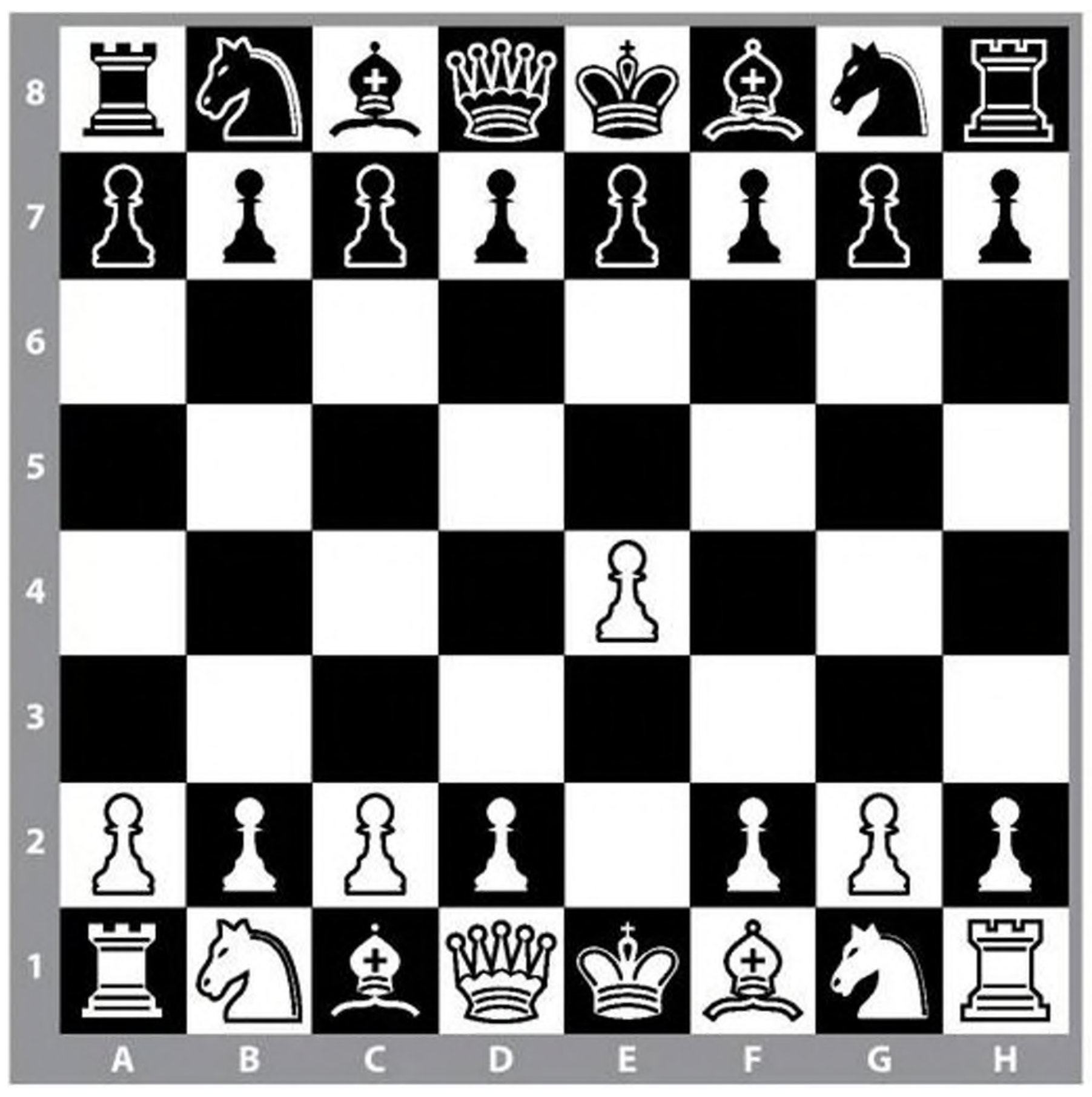


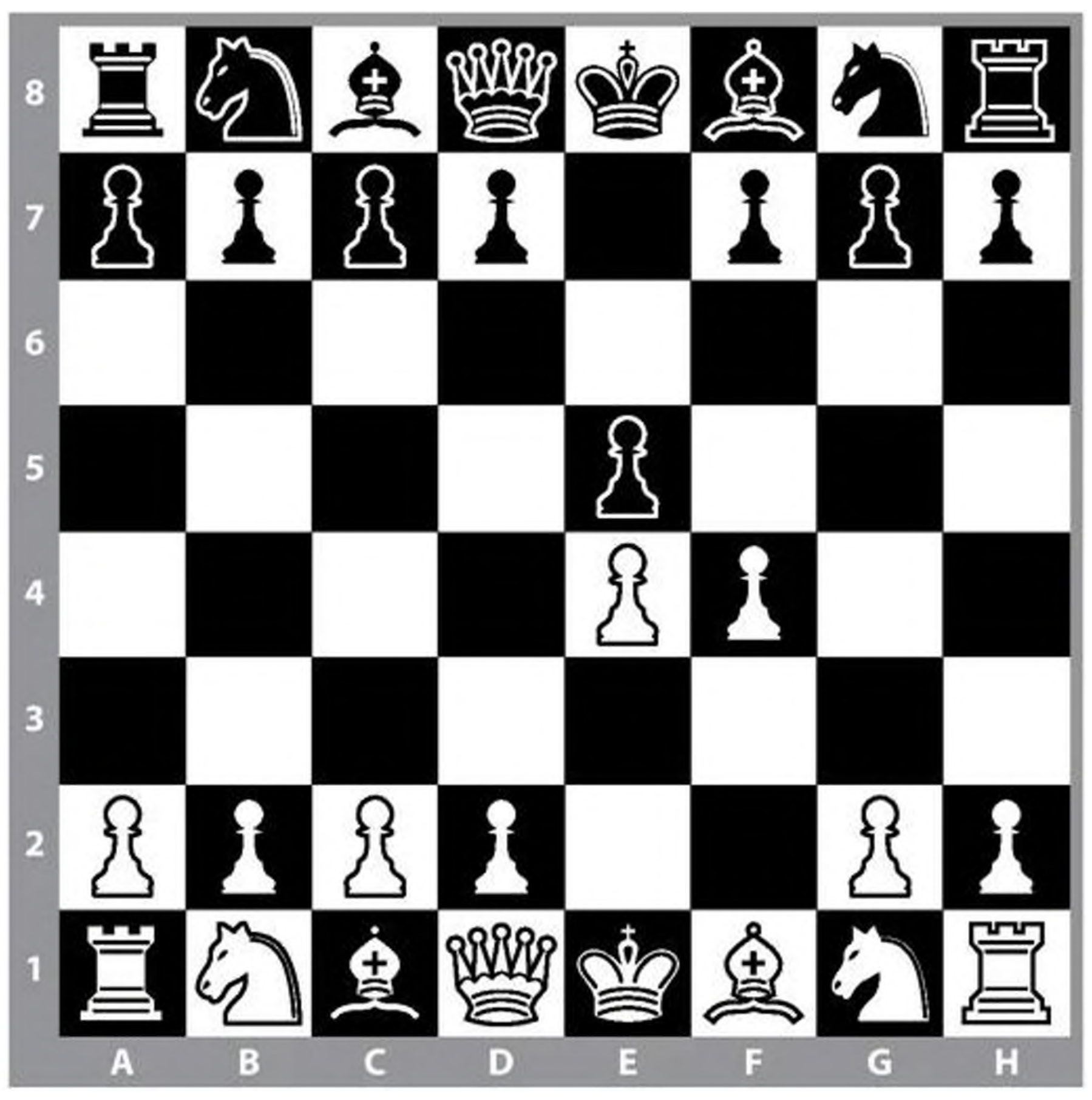


King's Gambit

1. e4, e5 2. f4

This was the most popular opening in the 1800s, though it is rarely used by chess masters today. It begins with the King's Pawn move (e4) with the black defence move as pawn to e5. This is continued by white with pawn to f4. The opening then splits into two branches depending on whether black takes the white pawn on f4 or not: King's Gambit Accepted and King's Gambit Declined. Usually acceptance is considered the better move, though there are numerous variations of both approaches.

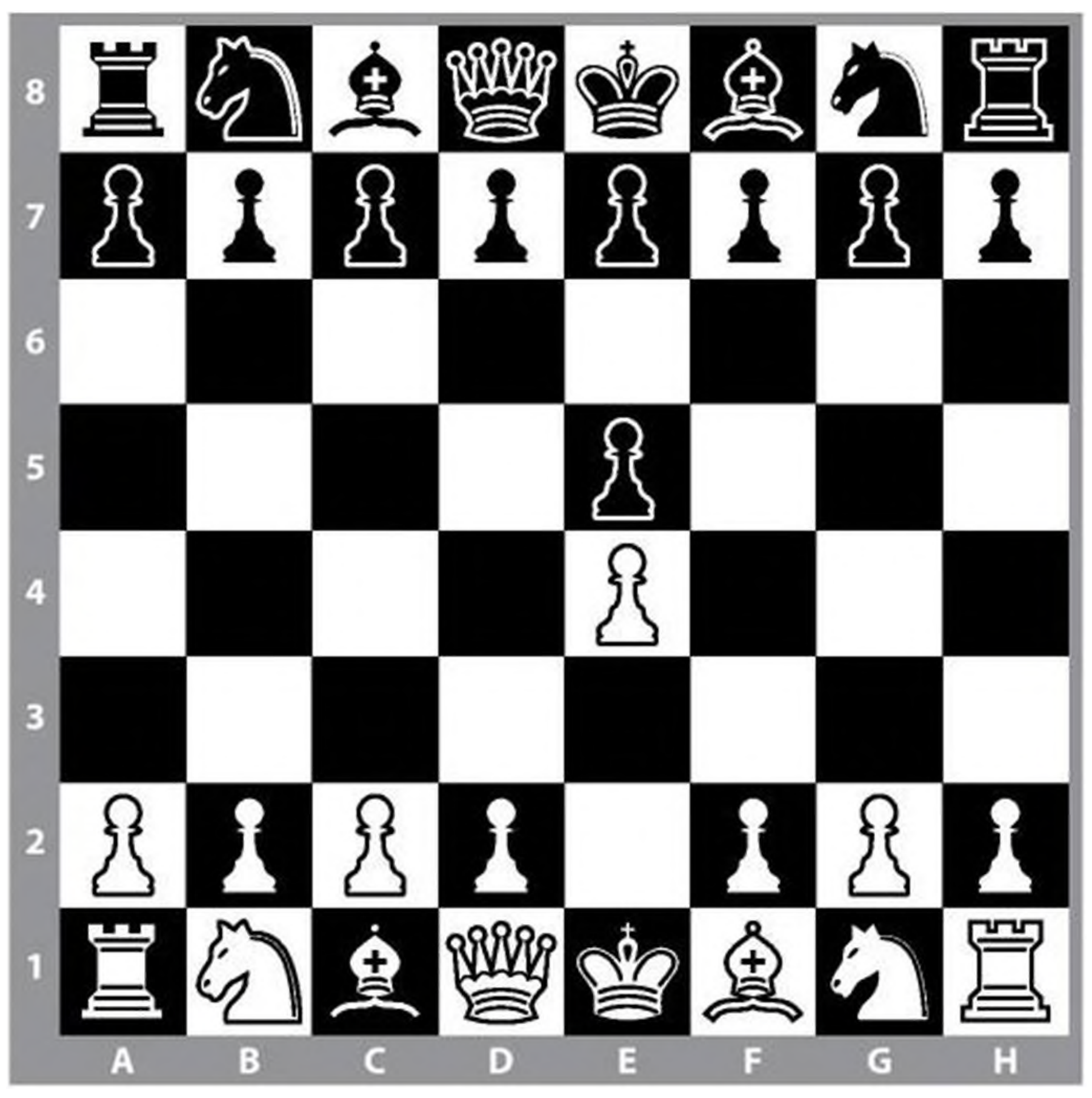


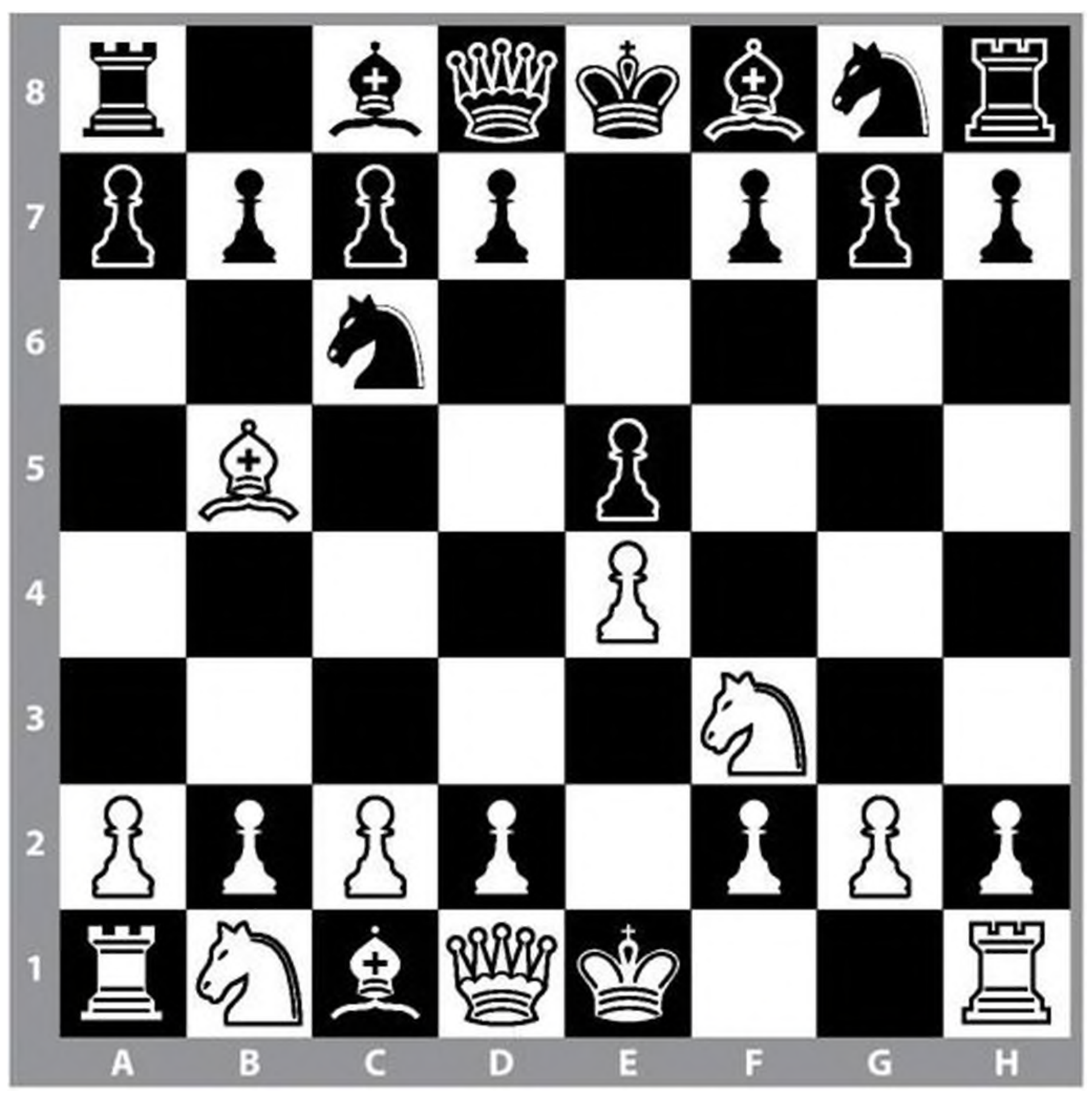


Ruy Lopez

1. e4, e5 2. Nf3, Nc6 3. Bb5

This is another classic opening also known as the Spanish. Named after a 16th Century Spanish priest, it has numerous variations. It begins with the King's Pawn opening move (e4), countered with a black pawn to e5 (as in the King's Gambit). White moves its knight to f3, followed by the black knight to c6. Finally, white moves its bishop to b5 – it is then in position to attack the black knight that is protecting the e5 pawn. The most common defence to use for this is the Morphy Defence (see below).

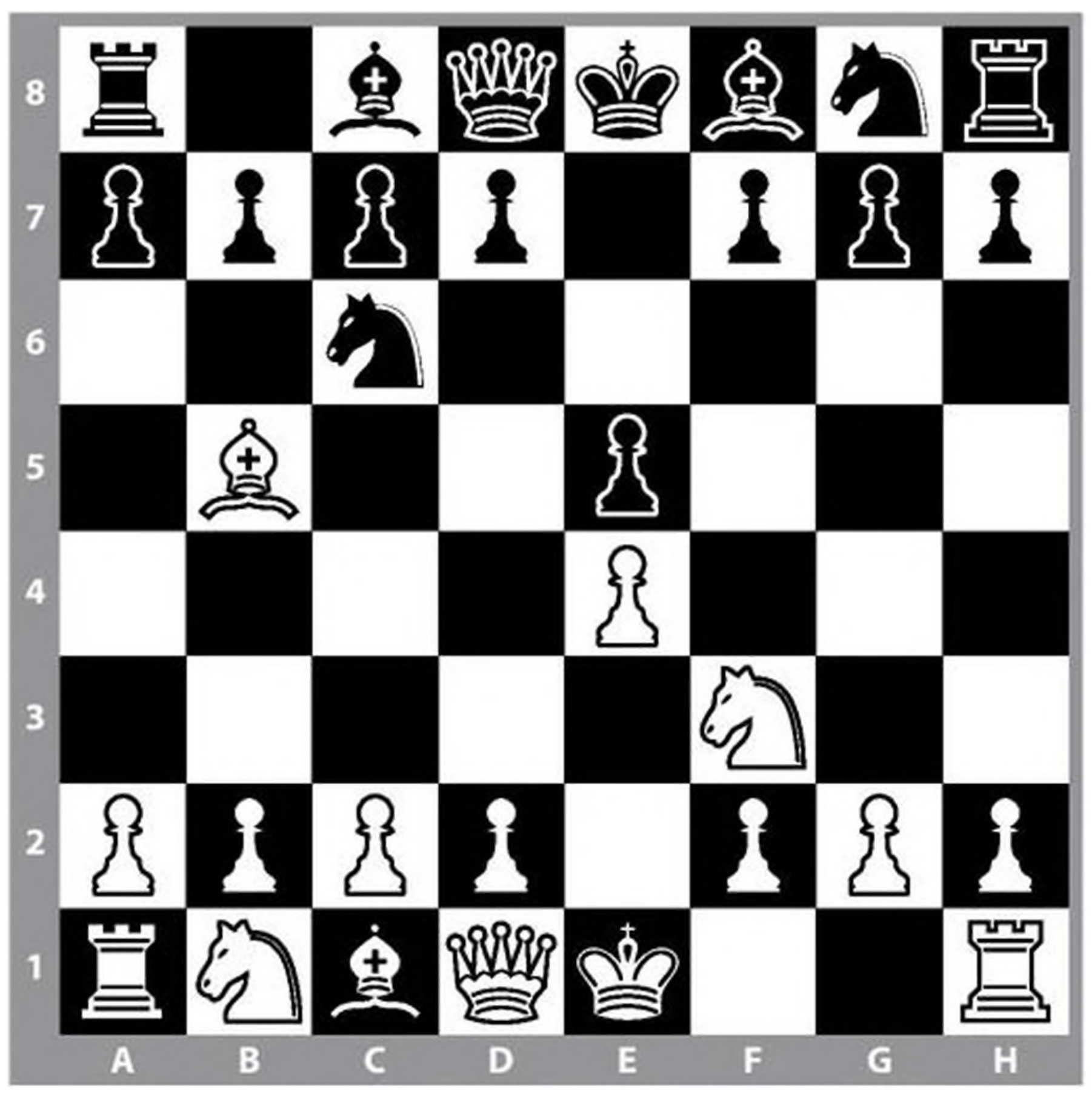


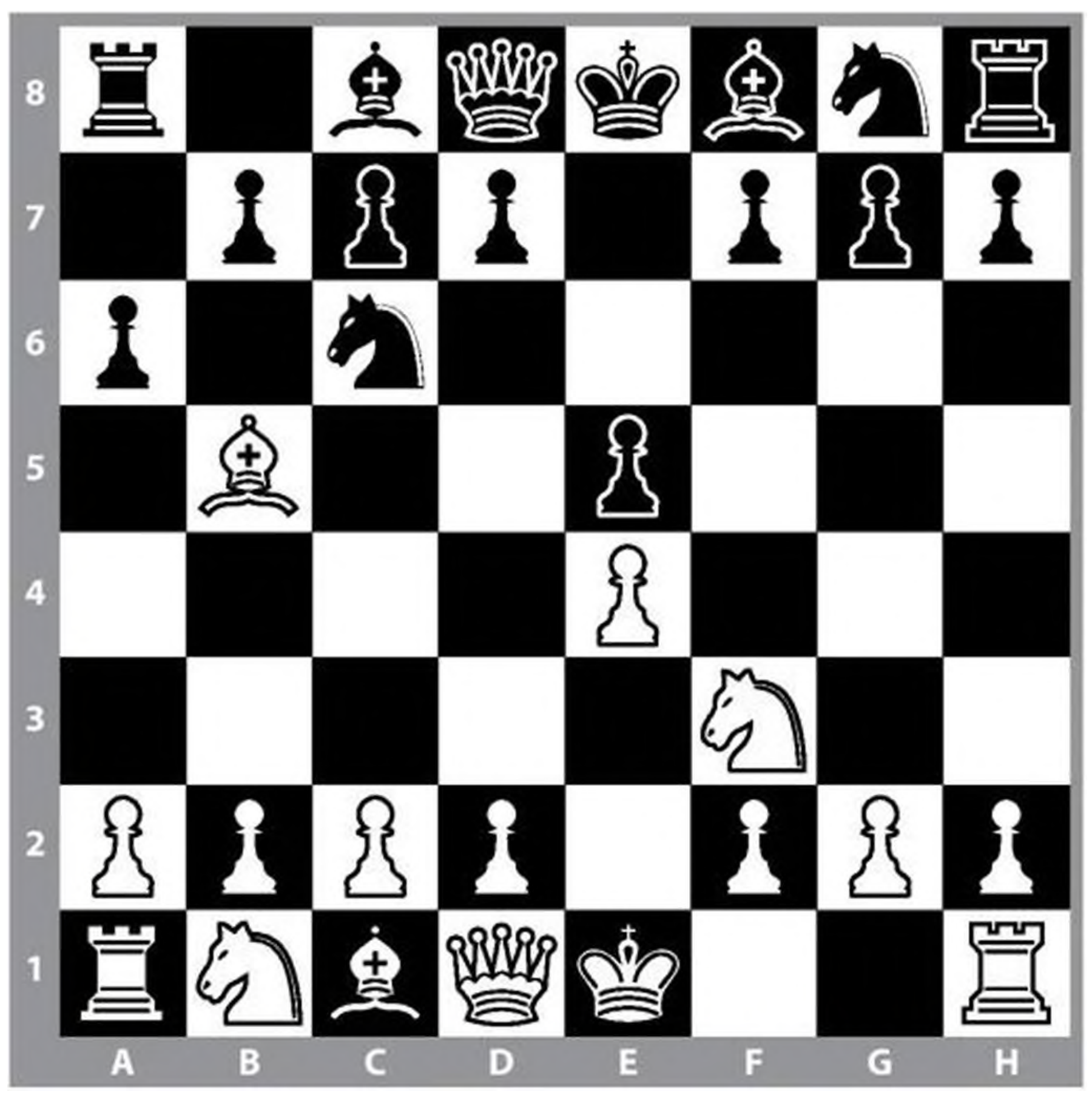


Morphy Defence

1. e4, e5 2. Nf3, Nc6 3. Bb5, a6

This defence is named after chess master Paul Morphy and it is used in 75 per cent of games that open with Ruy Lopez. After white has moved its bishop to b5, ready to attack the knight on c6, black moves its pawn to a6. This forces white to make a decision. It it doesn't move its bishop, it can then be taken by the pawn; if it does take the black knight, it can also then be captured. So white is forced to sacrifice or retreat, thereby strengthening black's position on the board.

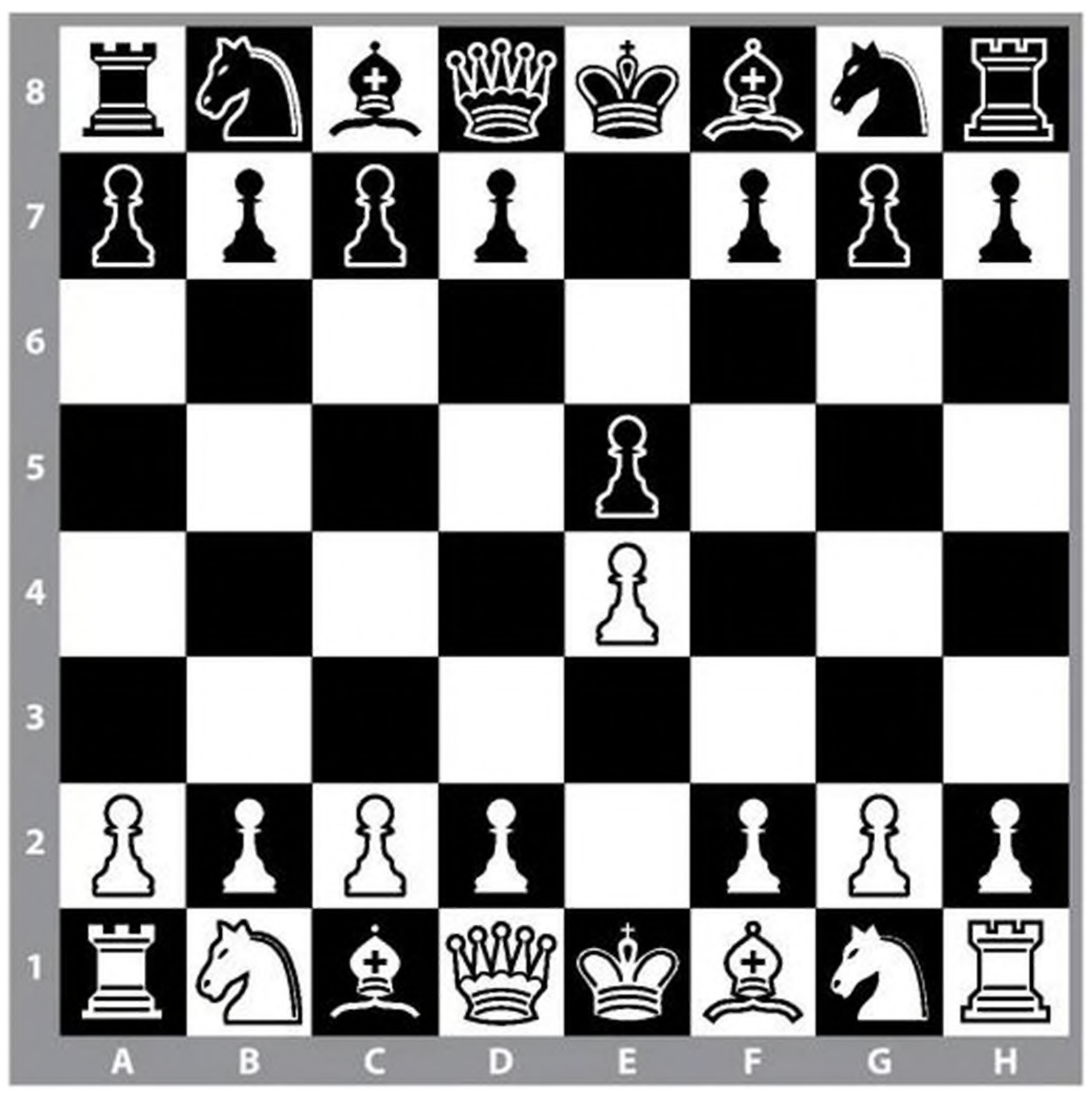


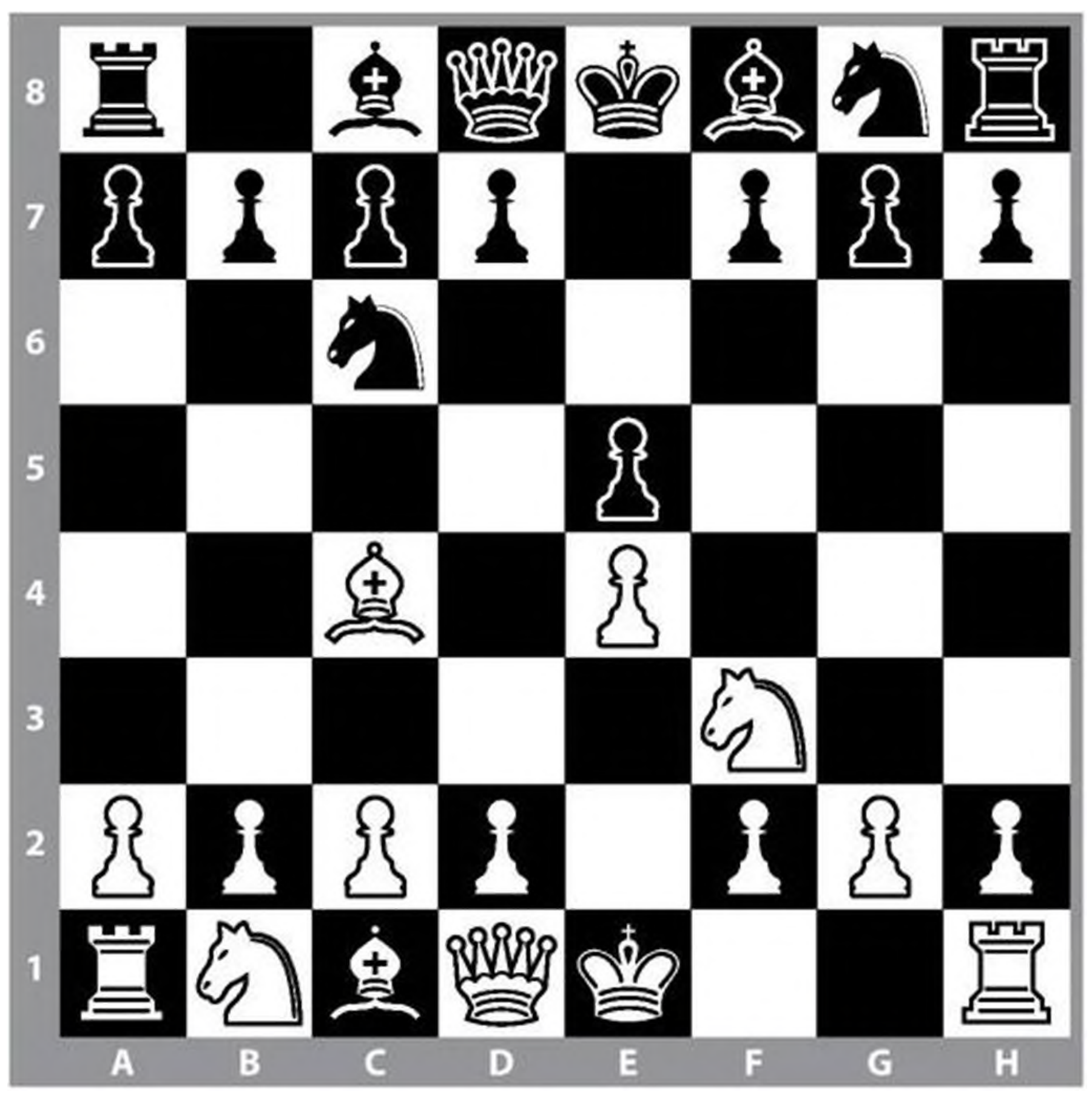


Italian Game

1. e4, e5 2. Nf3, Nc6 3. Bc4

Strictly speaking, the Italian Game refers to a group of openings that all start in the same way, but here we'll look at the first three sets of moves that characterise the family. One of the oldest recorded chess openings, it can be traced back to the 16th Century. It starts with a classic King's Pawn opening (e4), followed by black pawn to e5. White moves knight to f3 and black responds with knight to c6. Finally, white moves bishop to c4, which is the defining move of the Italian Game and is an aggressive play.

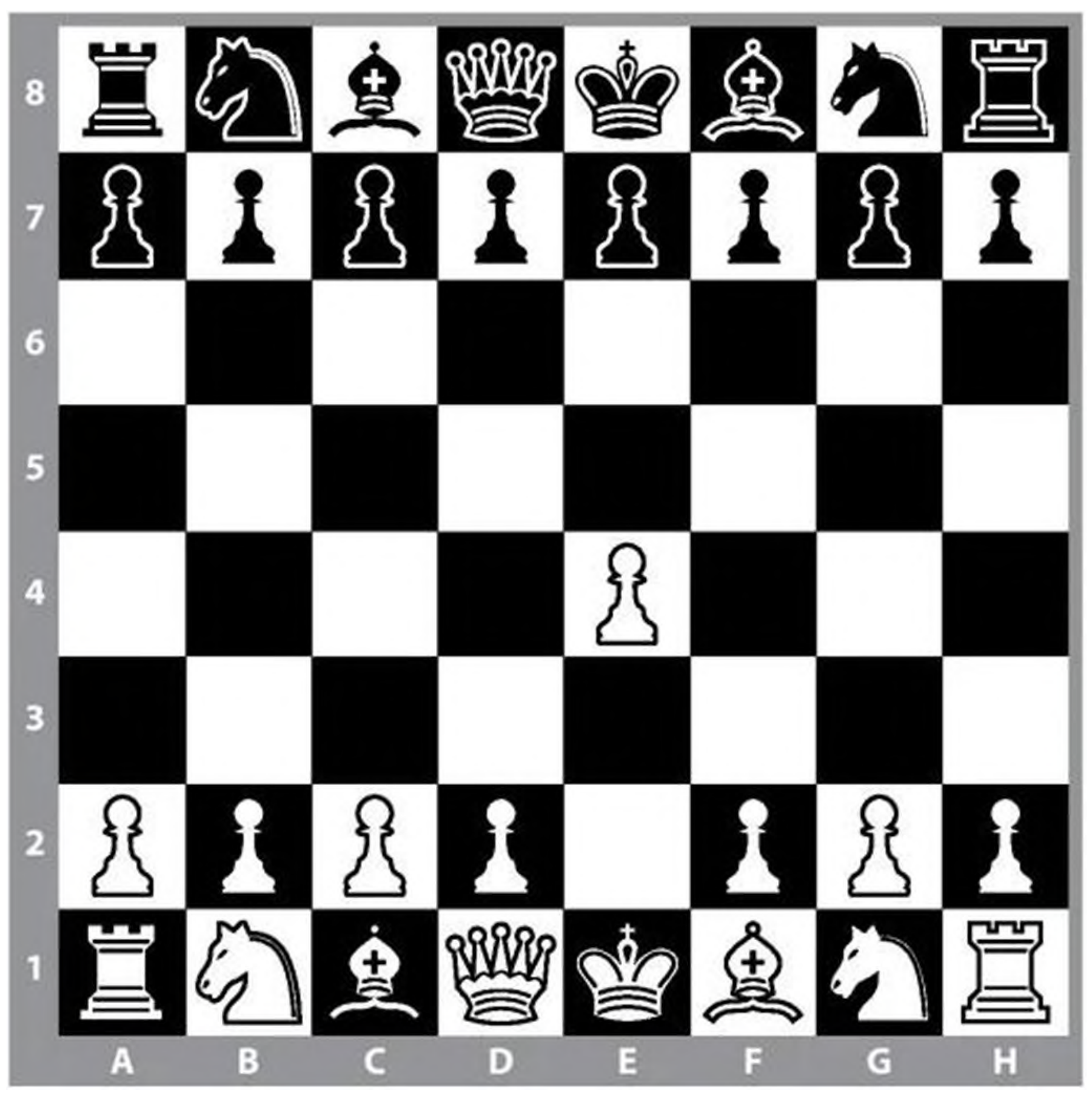


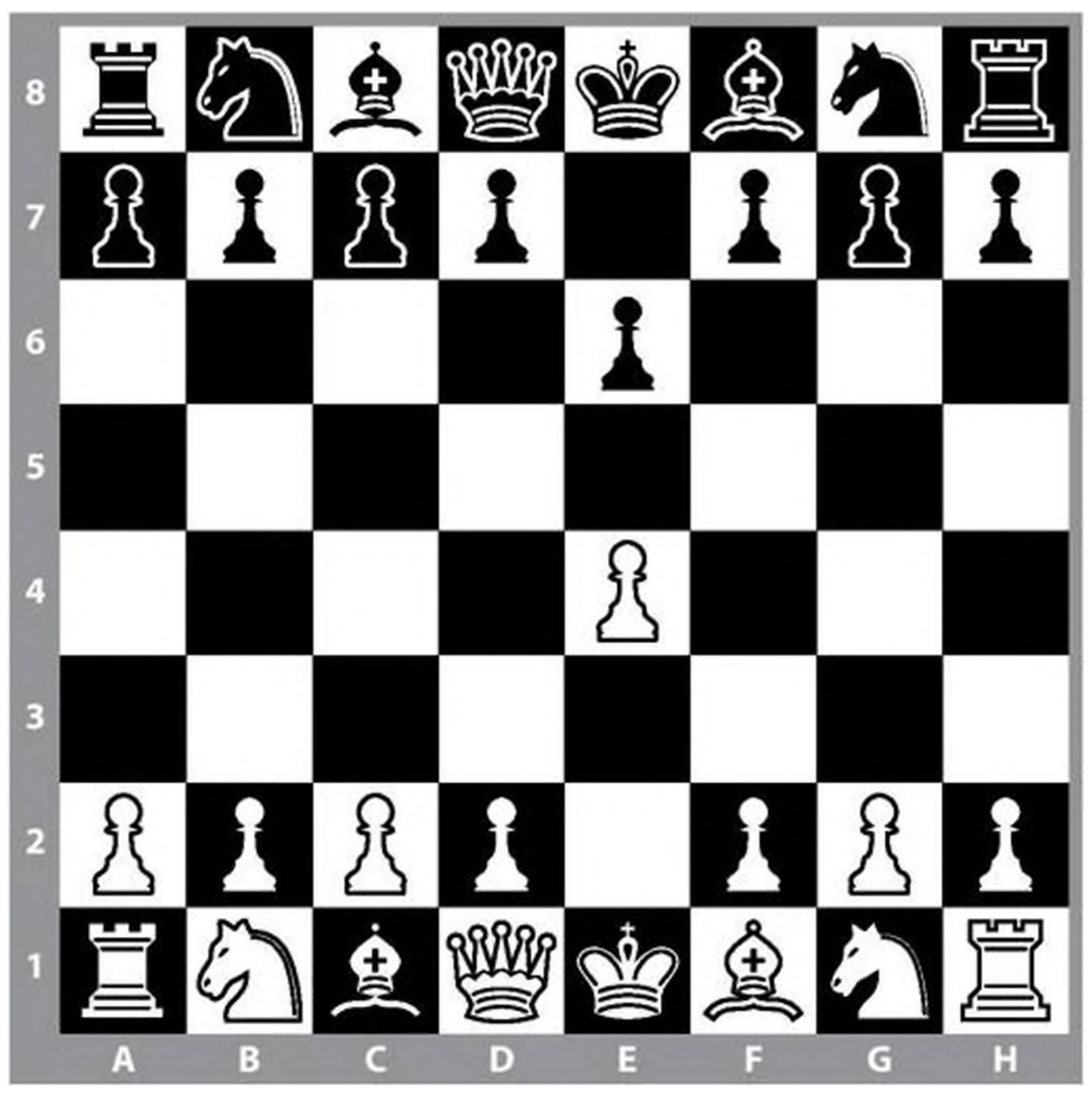


French Defence

1. e4, e6

This is a response to the usual King's Pawn opening (e4). Rather than black pawn to e5, as is common, it moves to e6. It is known for creating a solid game for black, but doesn't enable it to open its pieces up much in the earlier stages of the game. The game can then progress in a number of different ways, though the most common is white pawn to d4 and black pawn to d5, followed by white pawn to e5. After the French Defence opening, however, there are many alternative variations that can be followed.

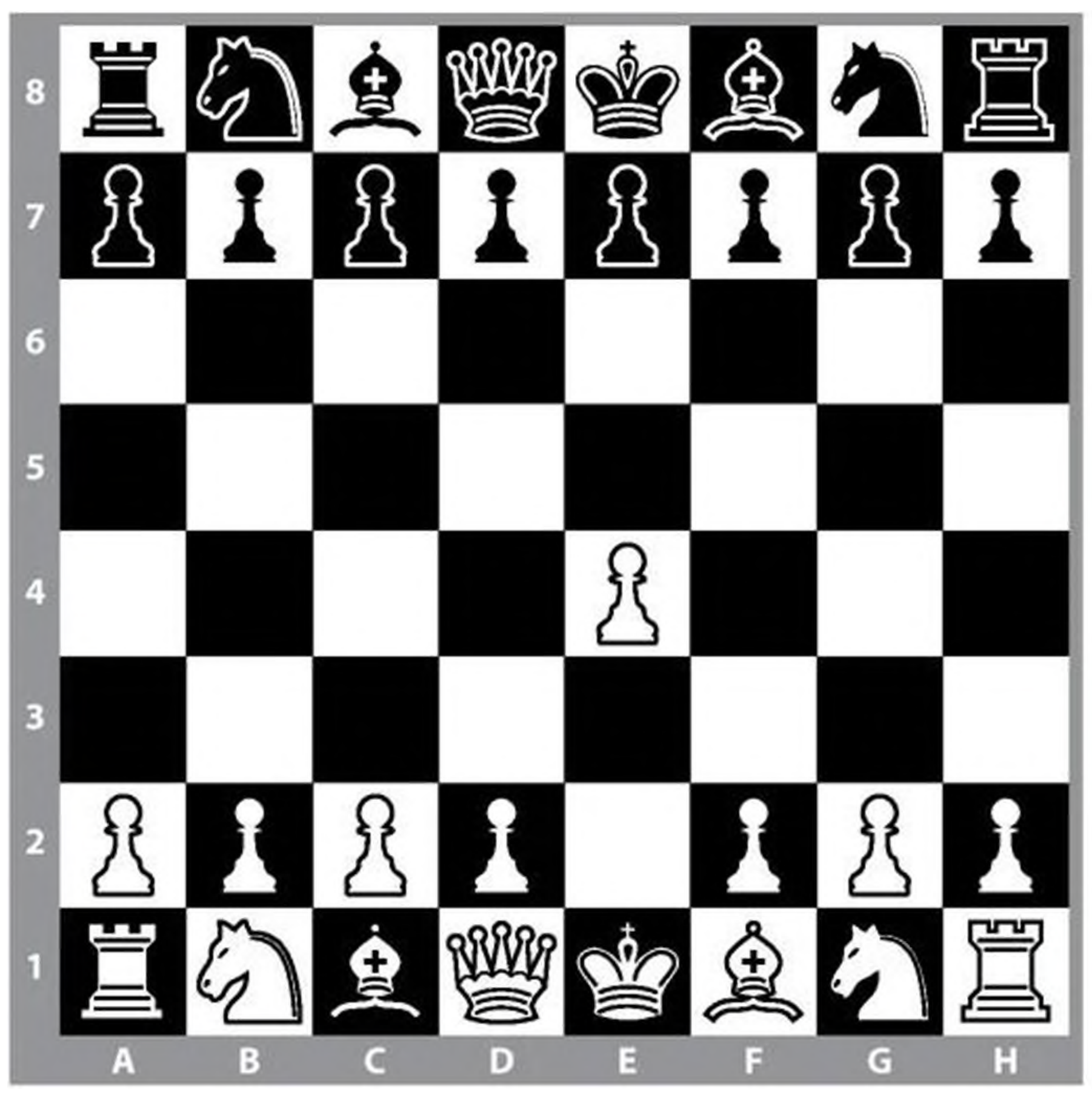


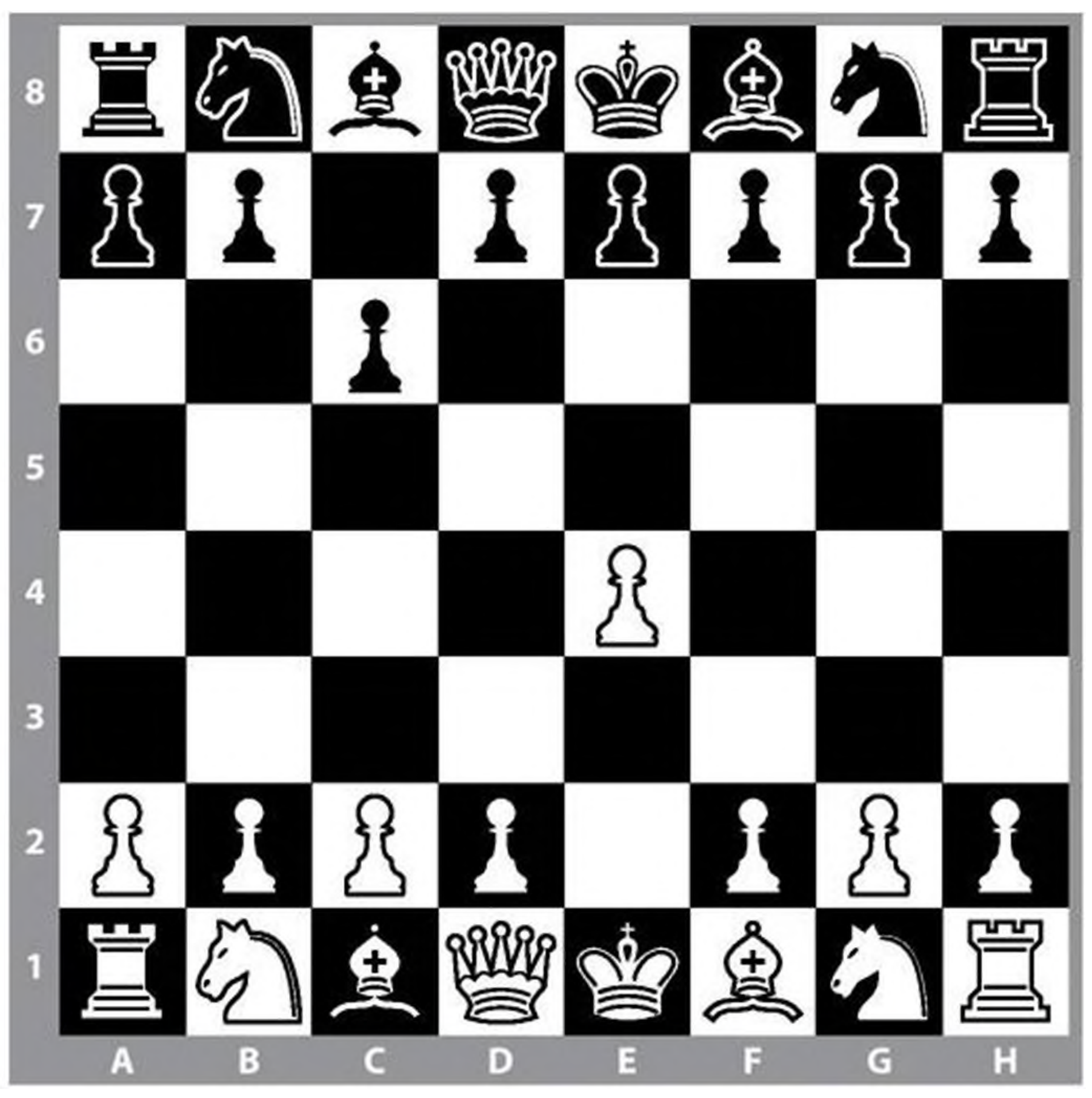


Caro-Kann Defence

1. e4, c6

Common against the King's Pawn opening (e4), it involves moving the black pawn to c6, which staggers play across the board. The move is named after two chess players, Englishman Horatio Caro and Austrian Marcus Kann, who analysed the move in 1886. There are many ways to continue from this opening, but the most common is d4, d5. White wins most games that start like this, but a draw is also a high possibility. Statistically, black wins less than a quarter of the time.

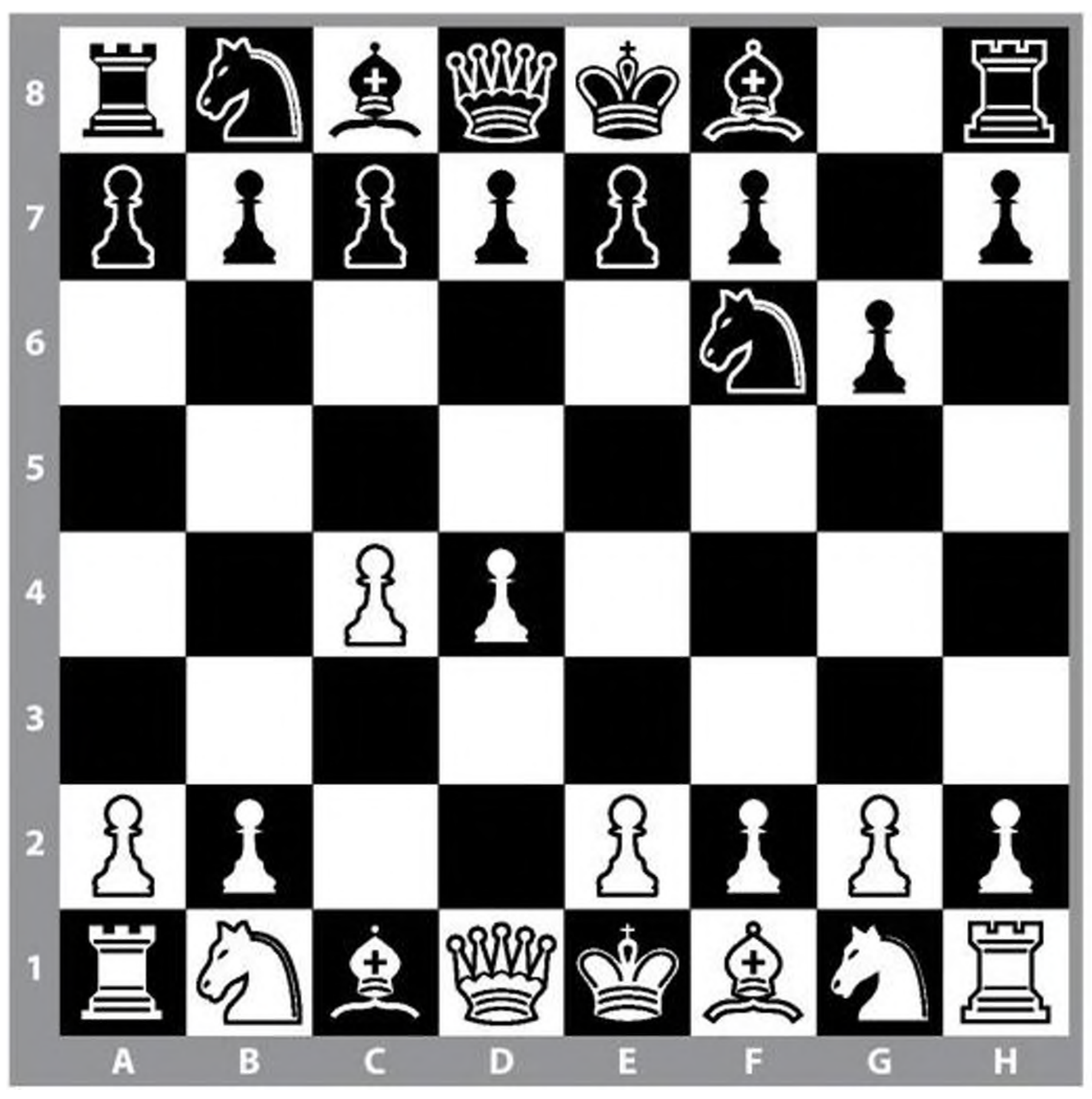


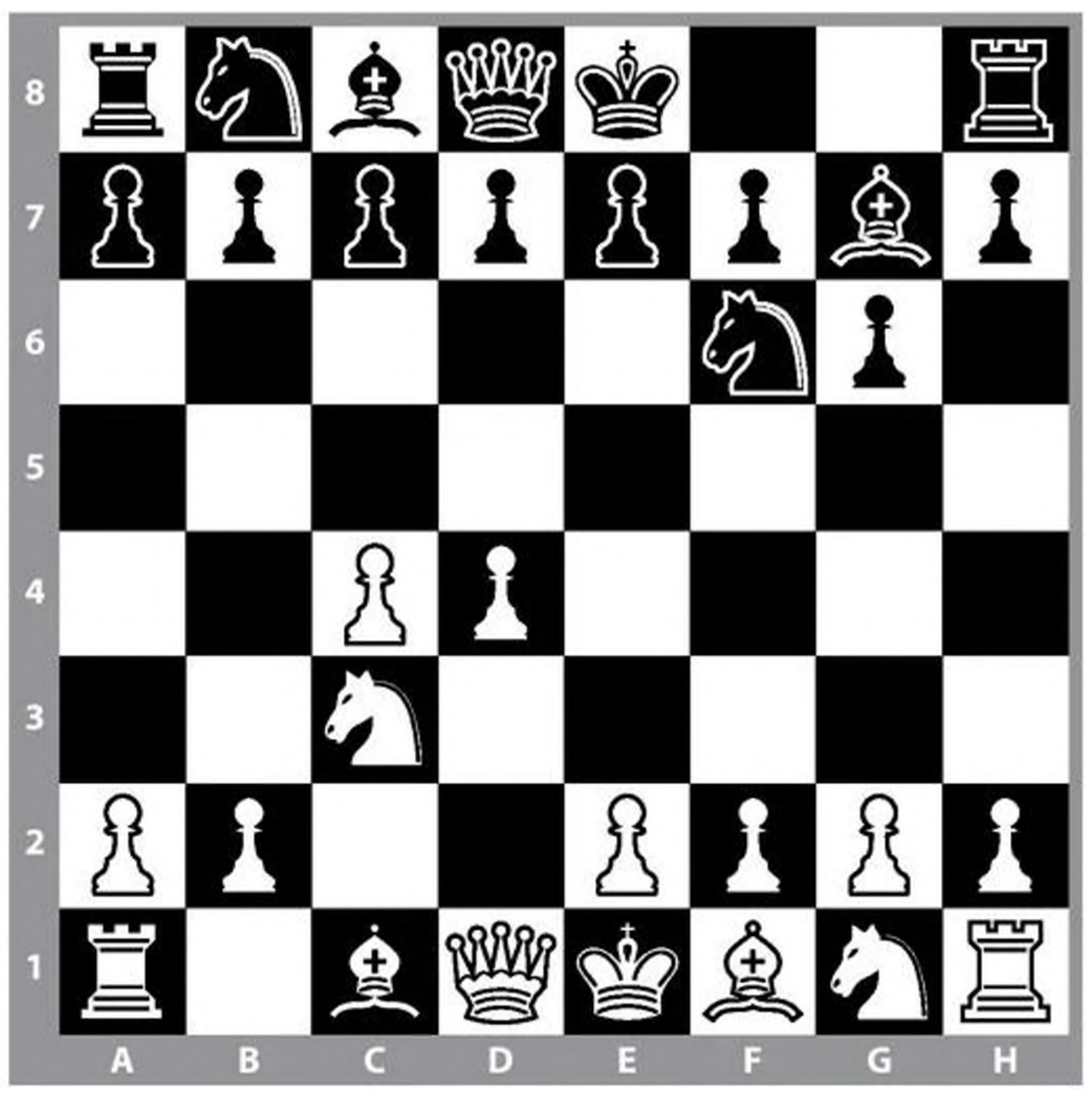


King's Indian Defence

1. d4, Nf6 2. c4, g6

The Indian Defence is a set of chess openings that start with white pawn to d4, then black knight to f6. A number of openings move on from this, including King's Indian. This is considered a modern set of moves, as it gives white control over the centre of the board deliberately. The King's Indian kicks in with pawns to c4 and g6. This sets the board up with white very much in the centre. White then usually plays knight to c3 or f3, or pawn to g3. The defence is when black plays bishop to g7.

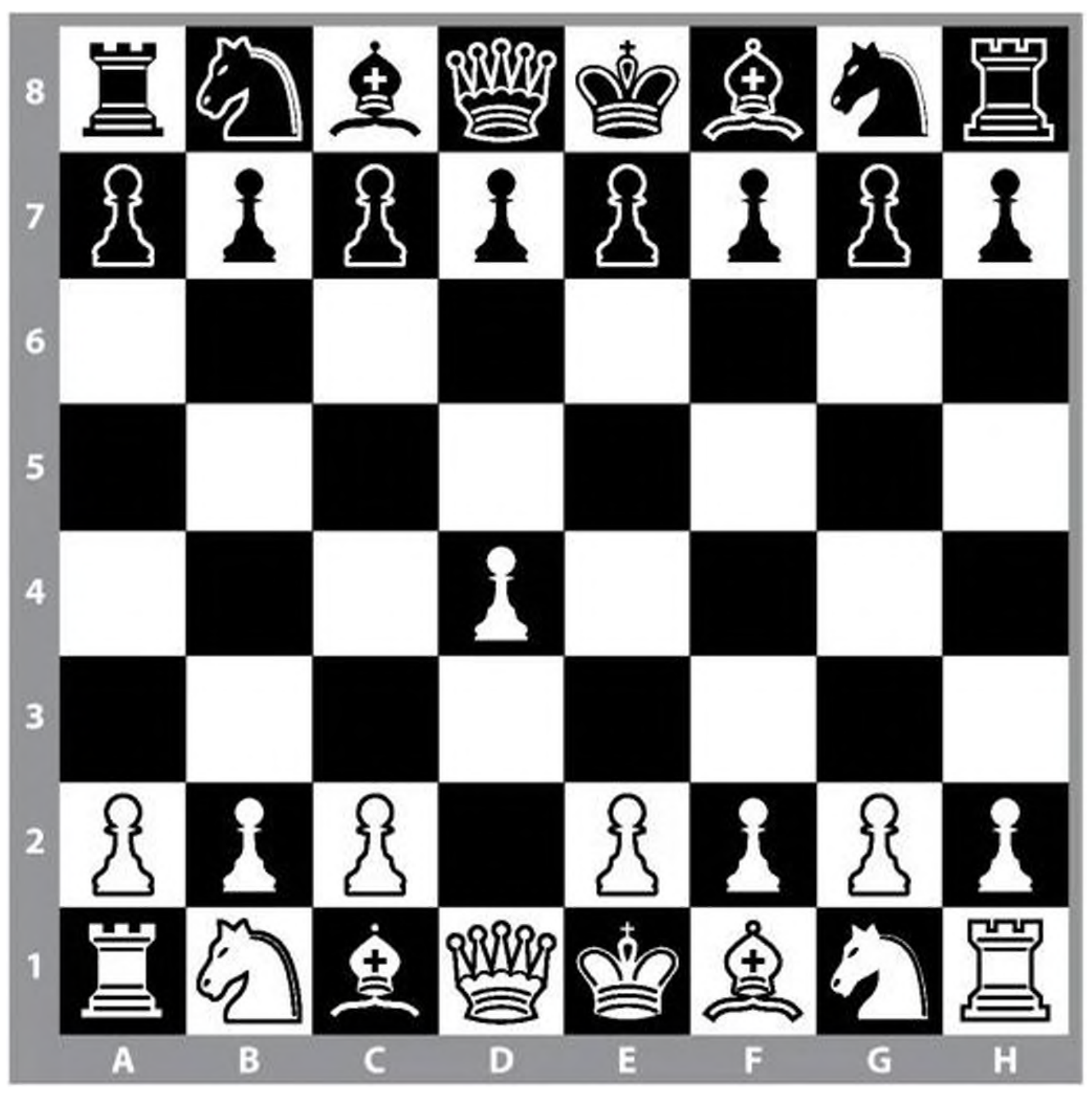




Queen's Pawn

1. d4

This refers to any game that starts with white pawn to e4 – only second in popularity to King's Pawn. In more recent times 'Queen's Pawn' has been used to refer to a game that opens '1. d4, d5', but there are variations where the initial white pawn move is followed up by different pieces by black, such as the Indian Defence games and the Dutch Defence. Historically, King's Pawn was a preferred opening, but the Queen's Pawn started to become more popular from the 20th Century.

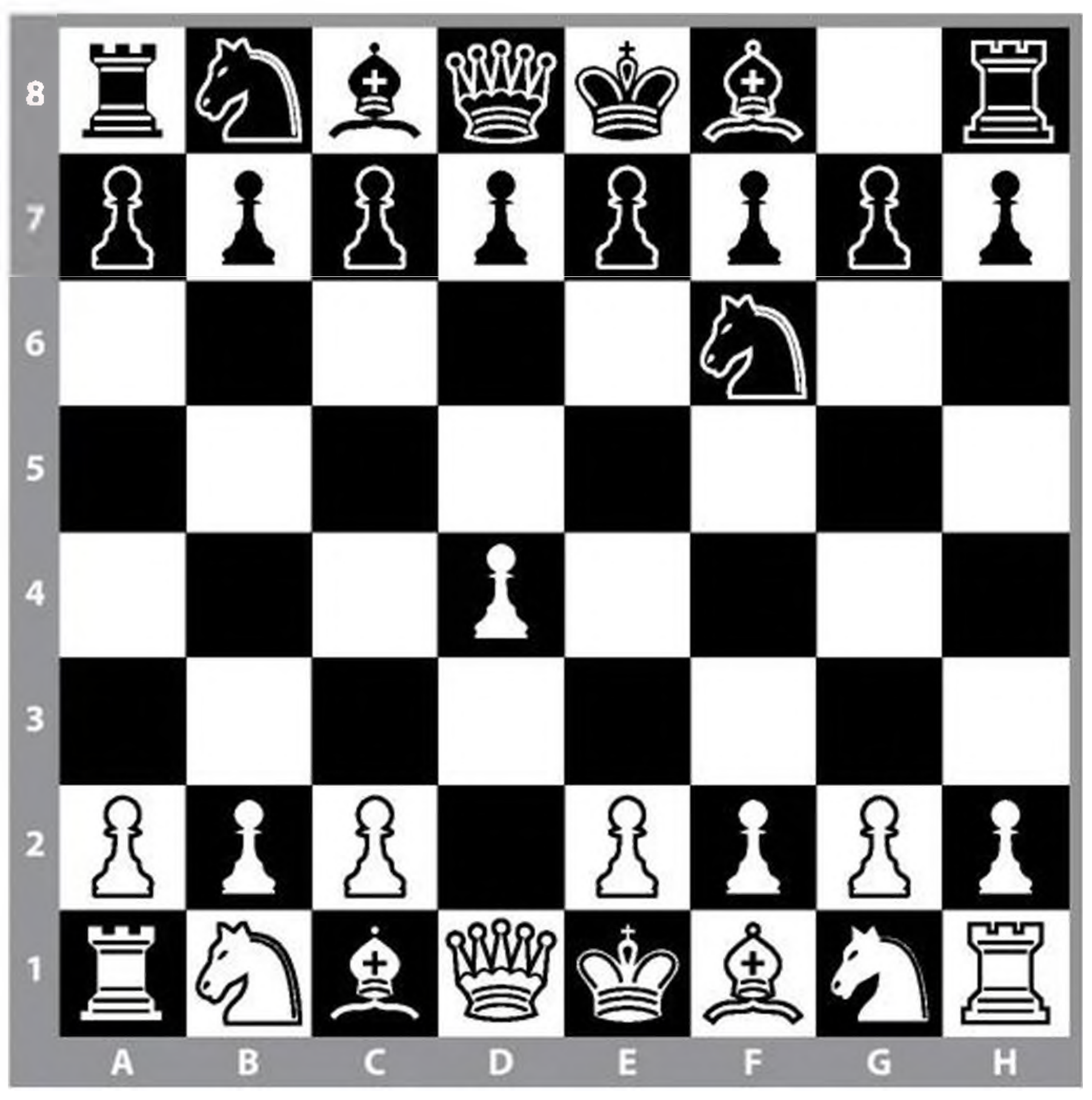


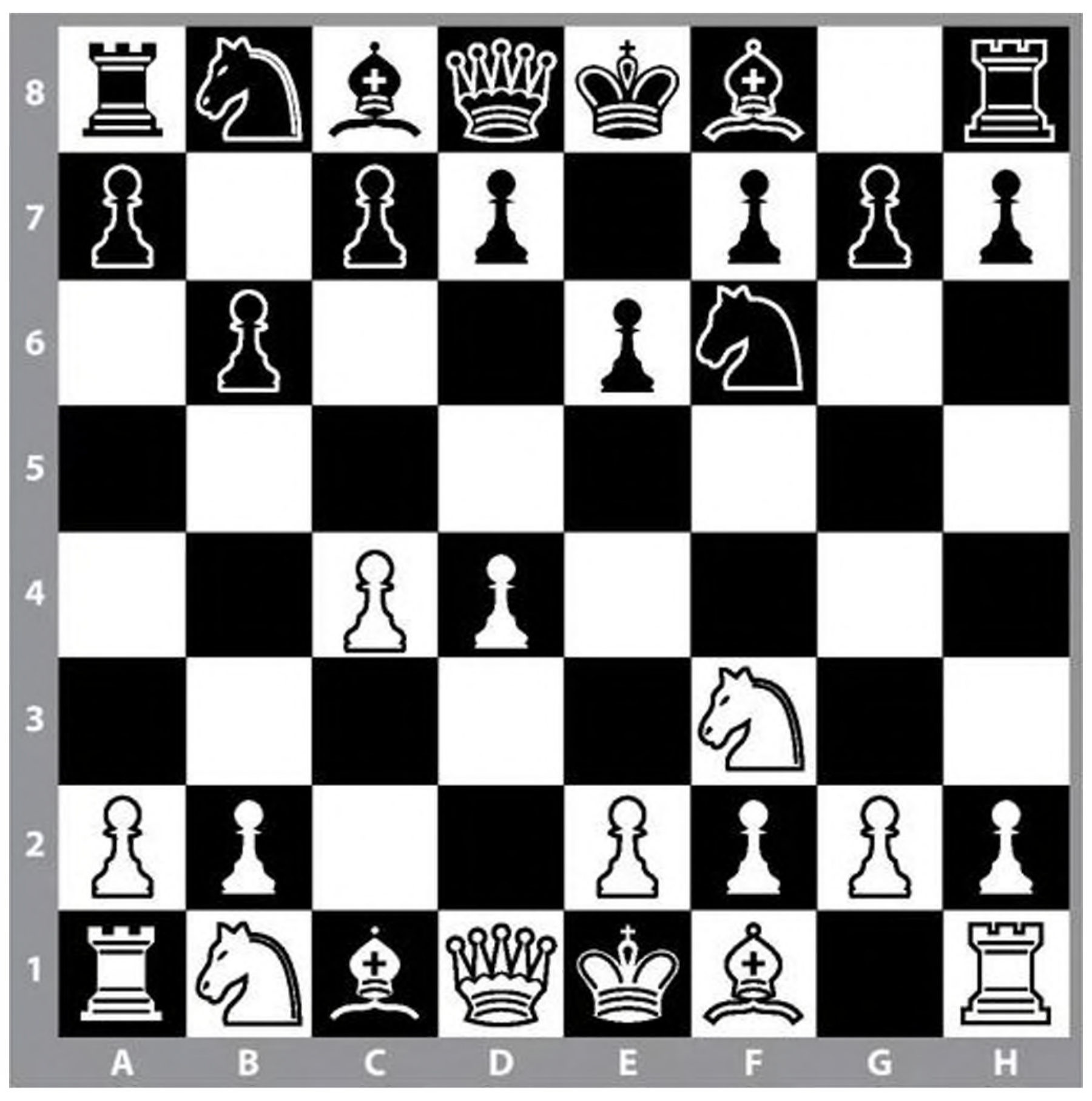
> "Queen's Pawn started to become more popular from the 20th Century"

Queen's Indian Defence

1. d4, Nf6 2. c4, e6 3. Nf3, b6

This is a defence to the Queen's Pawn. It is similar to other Indian Defences in that black tries to assert control over the centre of the board using higher-value pieces. It also makes the game develop quickly, which could unnerve an opponent trying to dominate the centre of the board from the start. In terms of winning, however, this particular opening ends in a draw more often than it does an outright win, as both players are trying to dominate. It is a good move for black, though.

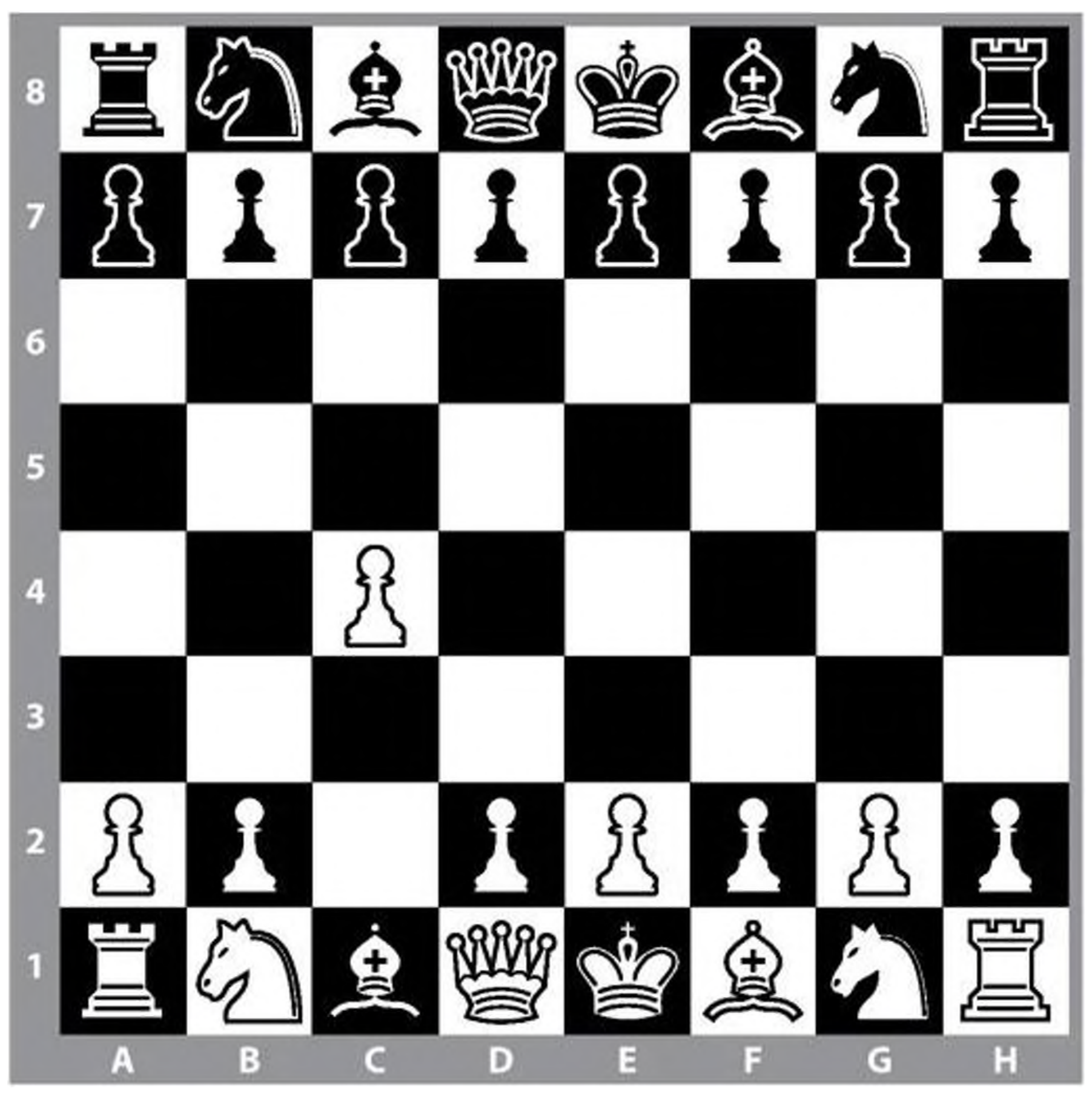




English Opening

1. c4

Another common single-move opening, but not as popular as King's Pawn or Queen's Pawn. It's a 'flank opening', where white moves an off-centre pawn to start. It dates back to 1843 when English player Howard Staunton, an unofficial world champion, first played it during a match with Saint-Amant – and again in London 1851 at the first international tournament. It can be followed by a range of black moves including c5 (a Symmetrical Defence) or e5 (a Reversed Sicilian).

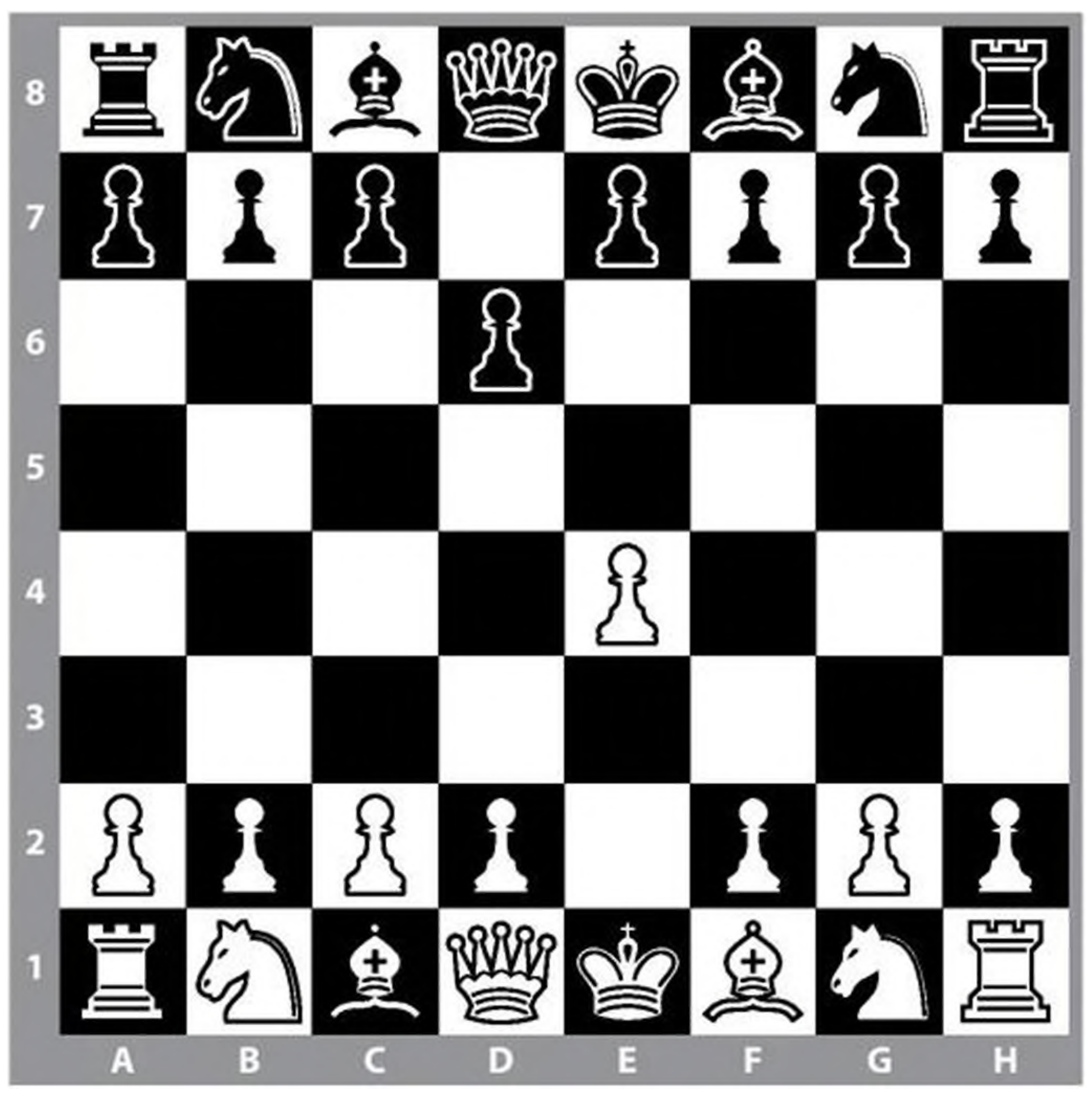


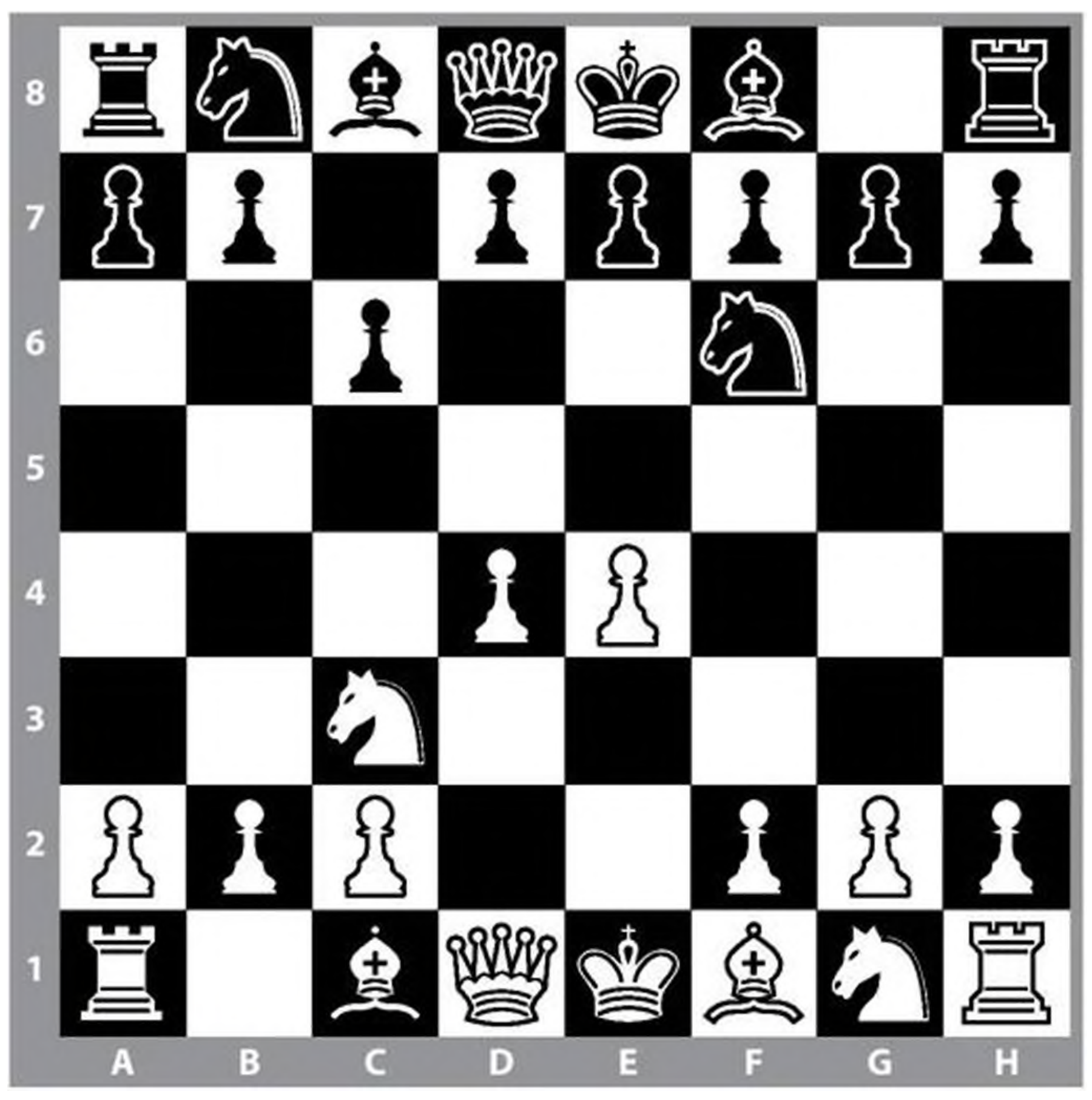
"The English is a 'flank opening', where white moves an off-centre pawn to start"

Pirc Defence

1. e4, d6 2. d4, Nf6 3. Nc3

This is named after Vasja Pirc (1907-1980), a famous Yugoslavian/Slovenian chess player. The move was first chronicled in 1887. It is, however, considered a more modern defence for the King's Pawn opening (e4) and it builds a strong centre for white. Black's defence instead works from the flanks, waiting to attack the white stronghold. It was rarely used historically and many modern players find it too risky as the power remains with white for many of the opening moves of the game.

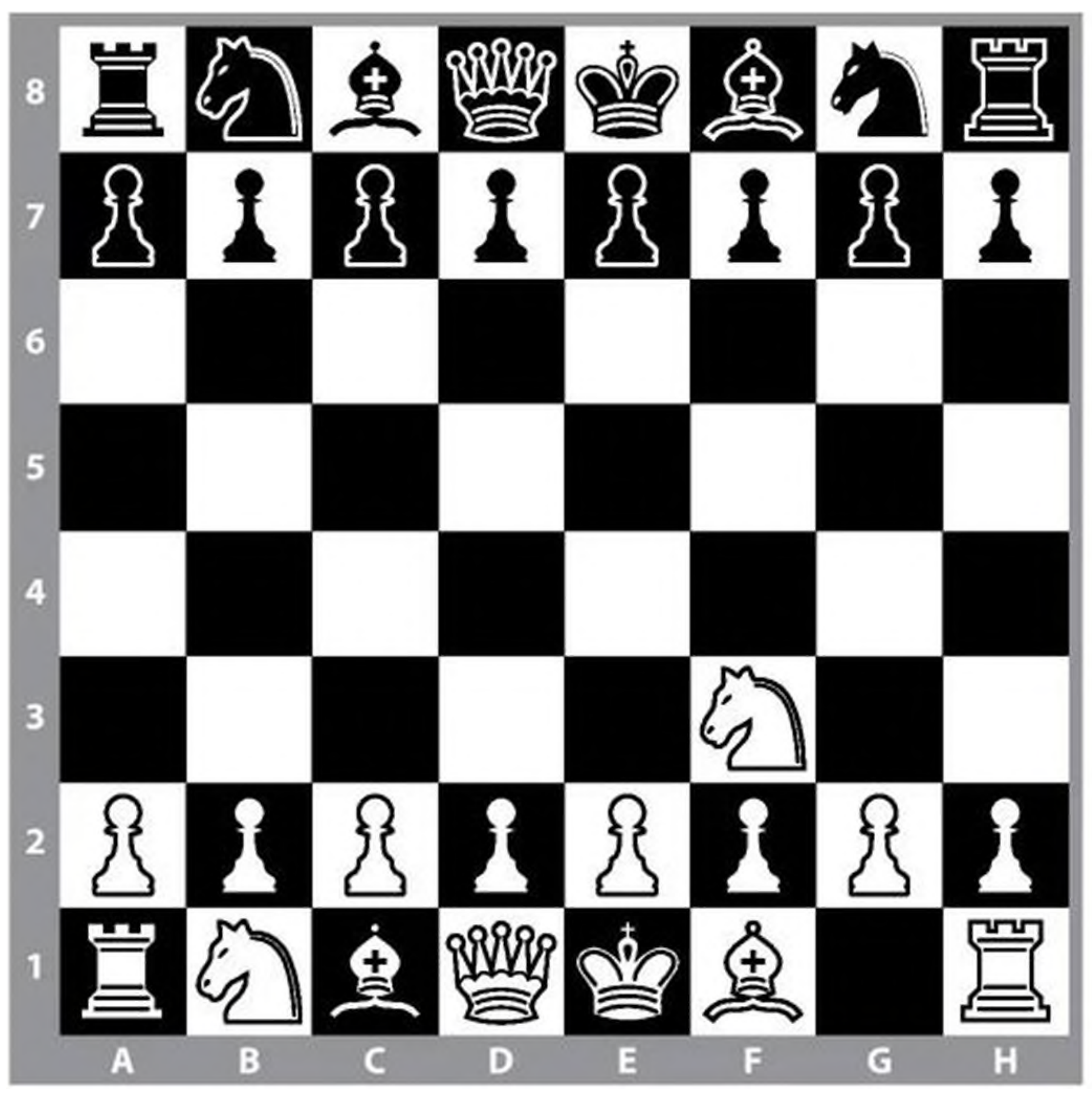


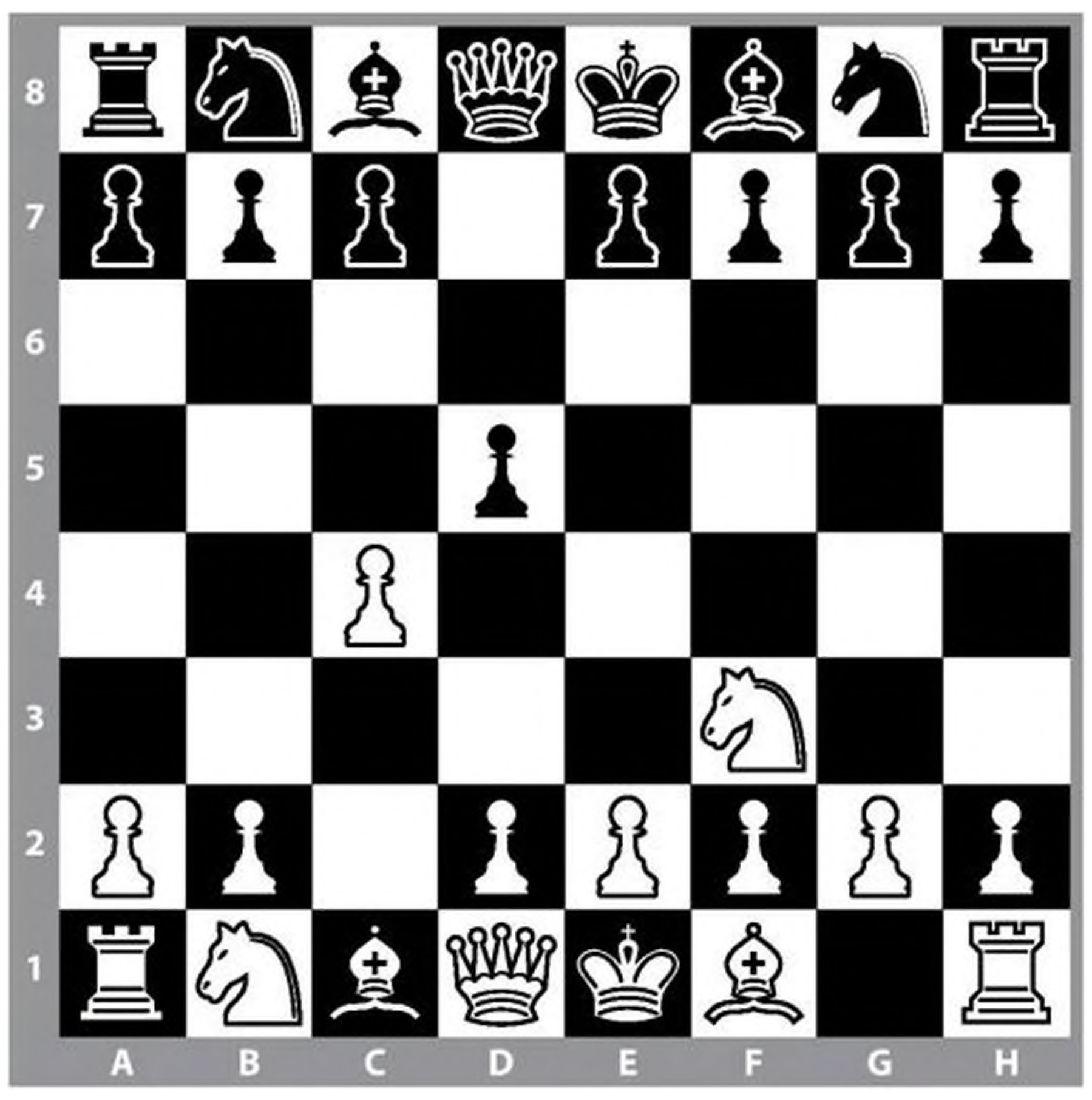


Réti Opening

1. Nf3, d5 2. c4

Like the English, this is a flank opening and it is one of the few that doesn't start with a pawn move. Instead, white moves knight to f3. Black follows with pawn to d5 and white counters with pawn to c4. By moving the knight first, white entices black to make a move for the centre squares so that it can make its own attack on the middle of the board from the flanks. Named after Czech player Richard Réti, it is considered 'hypermodern' – a school of chess that developed after World War I.



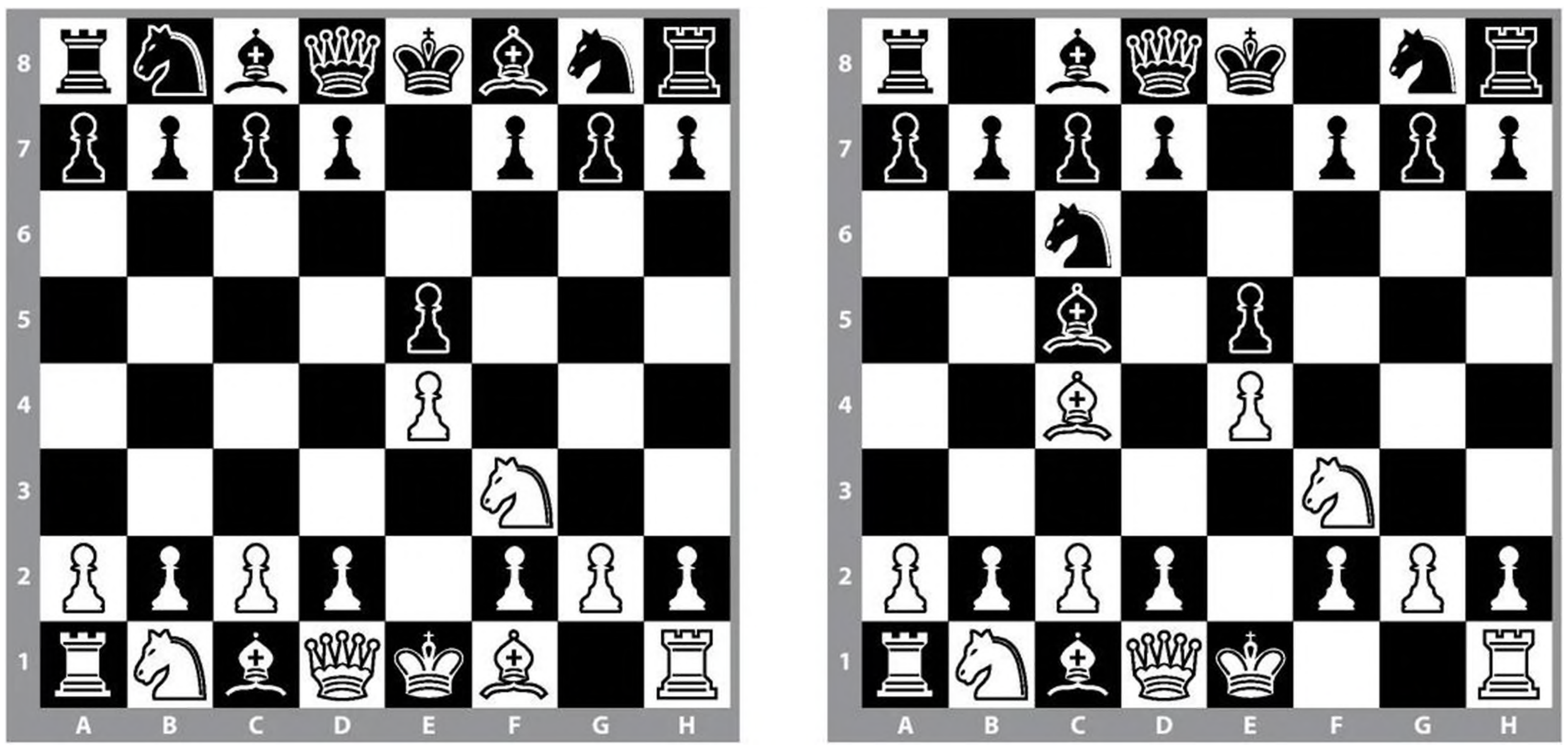


Reference

Giuoco Piano

1. e4, e5 2. Nf3, Nc6 3. Bc4, Bc5

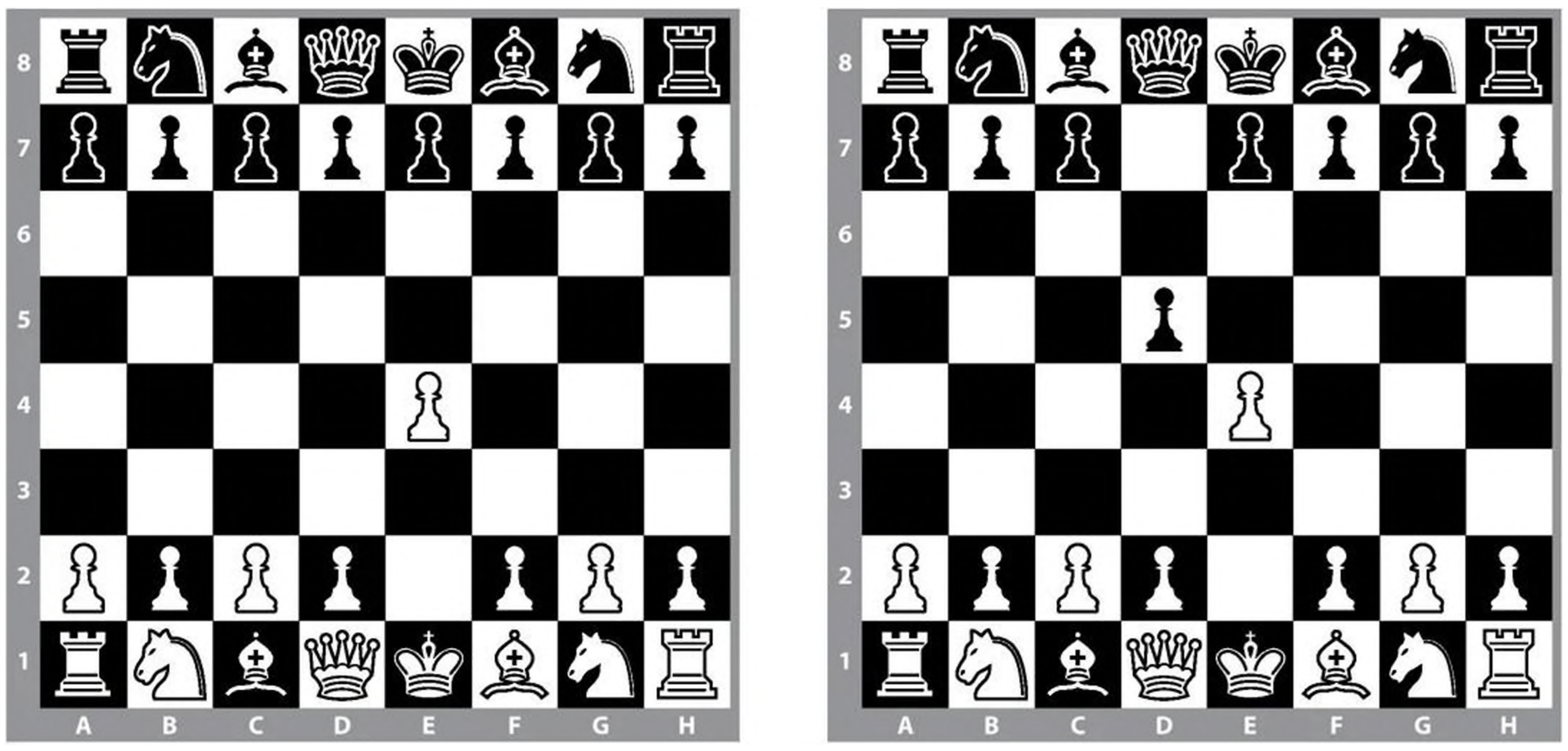
Italian for 'quiet game', it is thought to be the oldest recorded opening. It builds up tension in the middle of the board and isn't actually all that 'quiet'! It begins in the same manner as Ruy Lopez, with the King's Pawn move (e4) and a symmetrical counter (black pawn to e5), followed by knight to f3. Black also moves its knight in an attempt to march on the middle of the board (to c6), but white plays its bishop to c4 to prevent black from advancing. Black counters with its own bishop to c5.



Scandinavian Defence

1. e4, d5

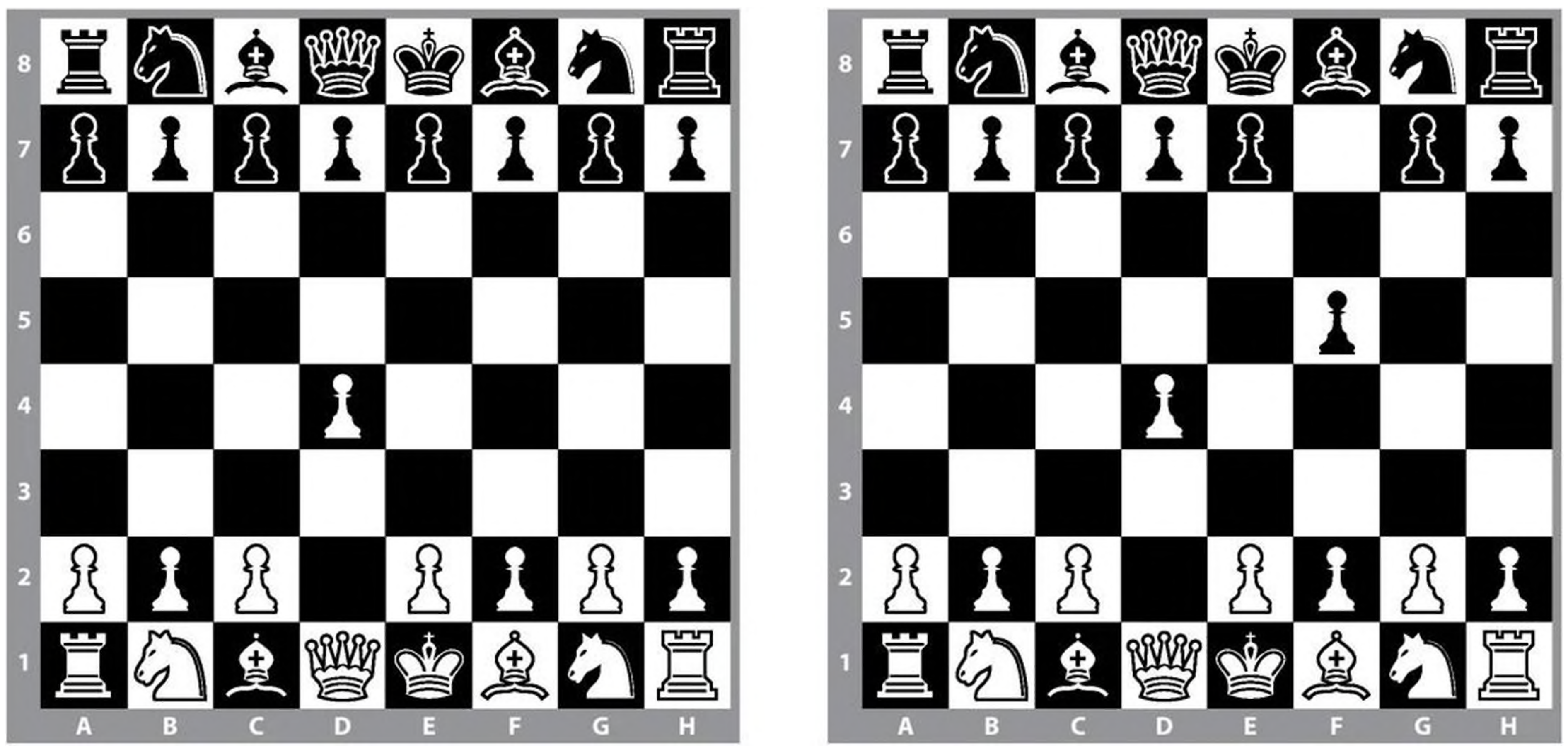
Also known as the Center Counter, it is among the oldest chess openings on record. It's an 'asymmetric' defence where white moves pawn to e4, then black to d5. It isn't used that much at high-level tournaments any more, but is considered a good move for beginners to learn. While it has a strong record of wins for white, some great chess players have used it on occasion with success, such as Capablanca and Alekhine. The normal continuation for white is to capture the black pawn.



Dutch Defence

1. d4, f5

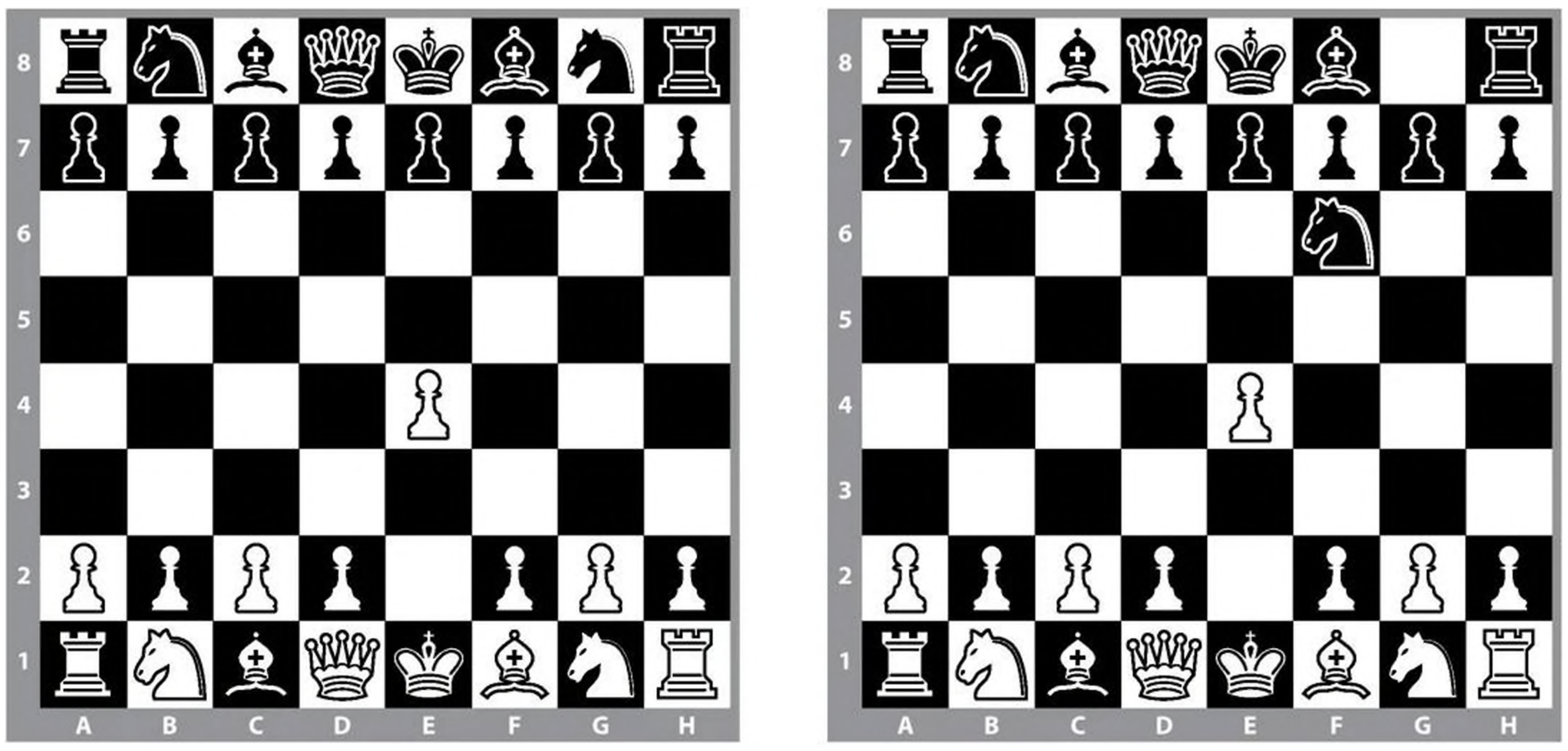
This is a popular defence to Queen's Pawn (d4) with an asymmetrical move by black to f5. It is considered risky, as it weakens the black kingside while making a claim on the centre of the board. So it's not often seen in high-level tournament matches, though it has been used by masters, such as Paul Morphy, with success. It reached a peak of use in the 1950s, but is now rarely seen. There are a number of possible continuations for white: traditionally pawn c4 or more commonly pawn to g3.



Alekhine's Defence

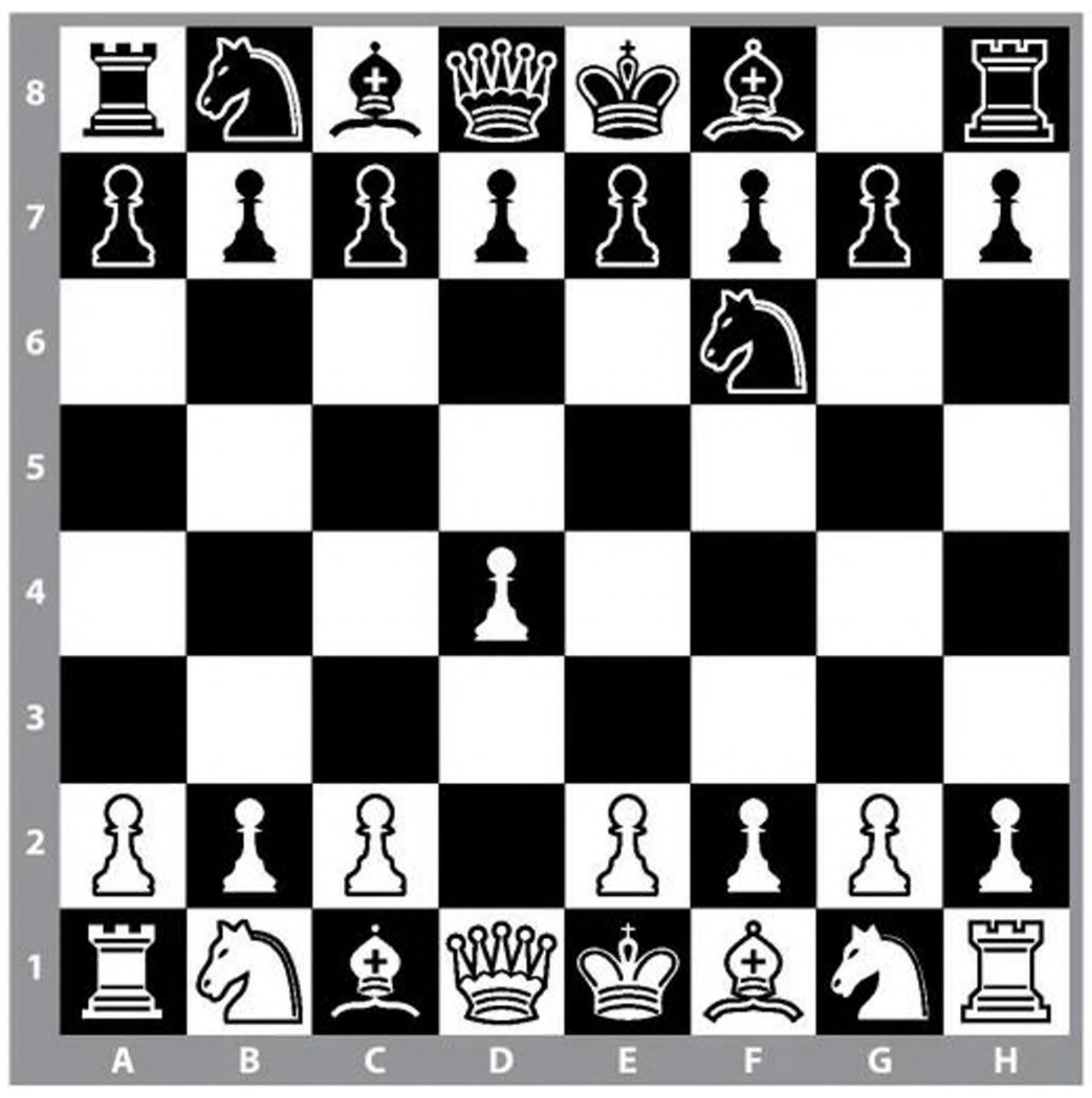
1. e4, Nf6

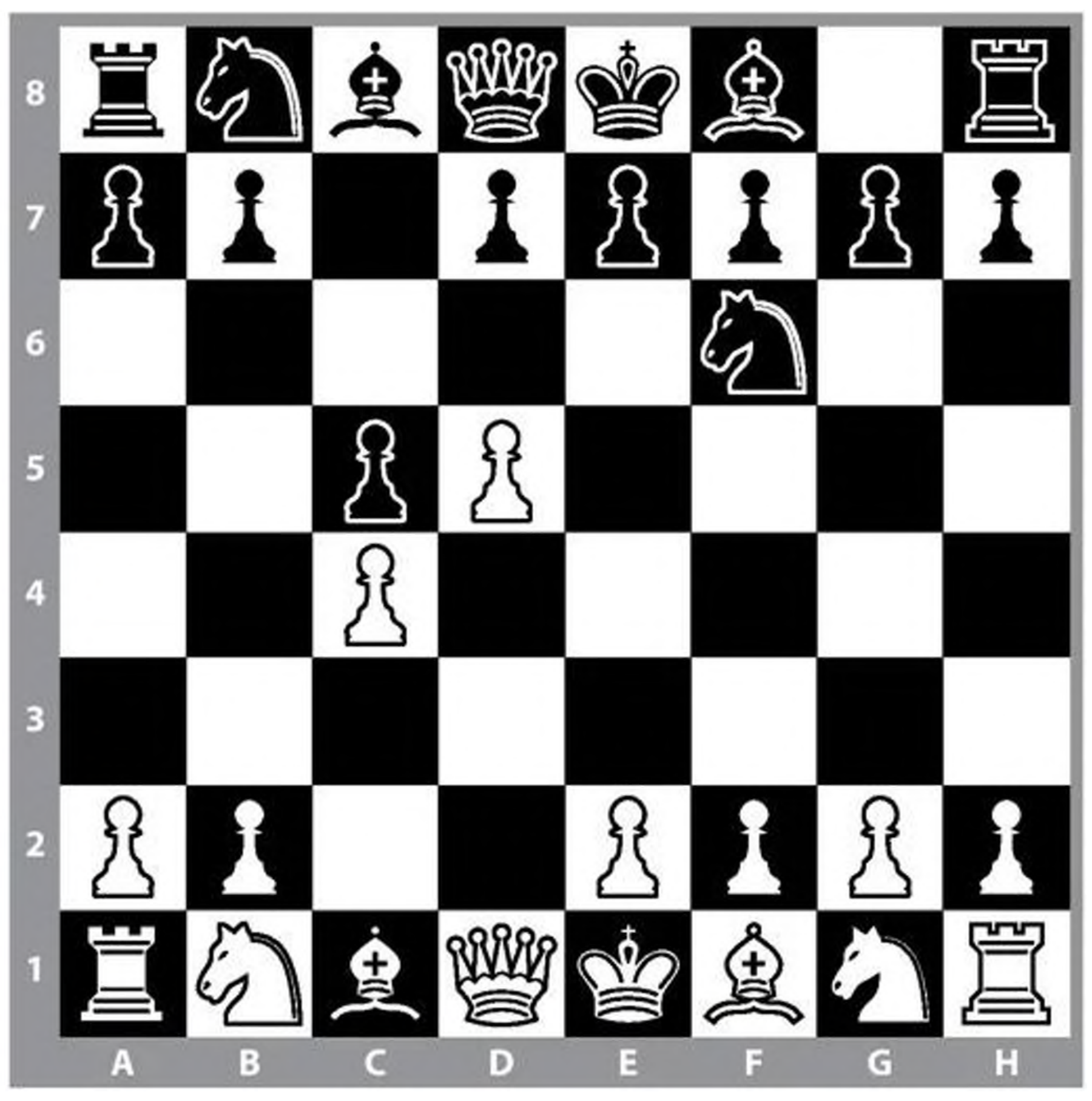
A defence for King's Pawn (e4), this is named after the great Alexander Alekhine who used it in Budapest in 1921. Black makes no claim on the centre of the board (with knight to f6), hoping to draw white forward early on so it can form an attack later in the game. It is often used by aggressive players, but is not currently that common in high-level tournaments, going in and out of fashion. It produces strong results for both black and white in terms of wins, and just as often ends in a draw.



Benoni Defence

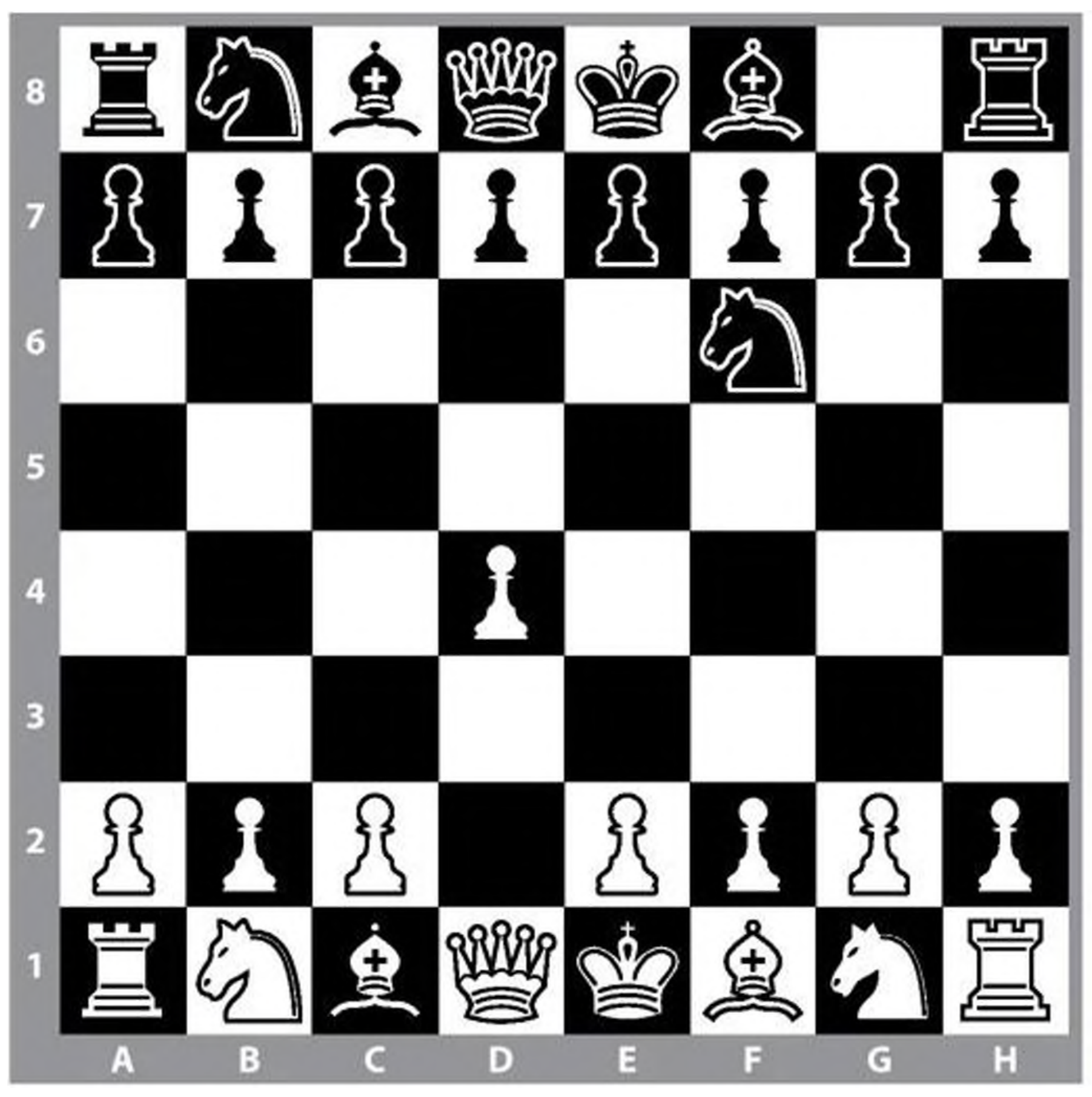
1. d4, Nf6 2. c4, c5 3. d5
A version of the Indian Defence, it starts with the white pawn to d4, black knight to f6 opening. White counters with pawn c4, mirrored by black with c5. White finishes the opening sequence with d5. There are many variations and continuations of the Benoni Defence. Depending on black's counter-move to the white pawn to d5, it can become the Czech Benoni (pawn to e5) or a Modern Benoni (e6). Black may also sacrifice a pawn (b5), which is called a Benko Gambit.

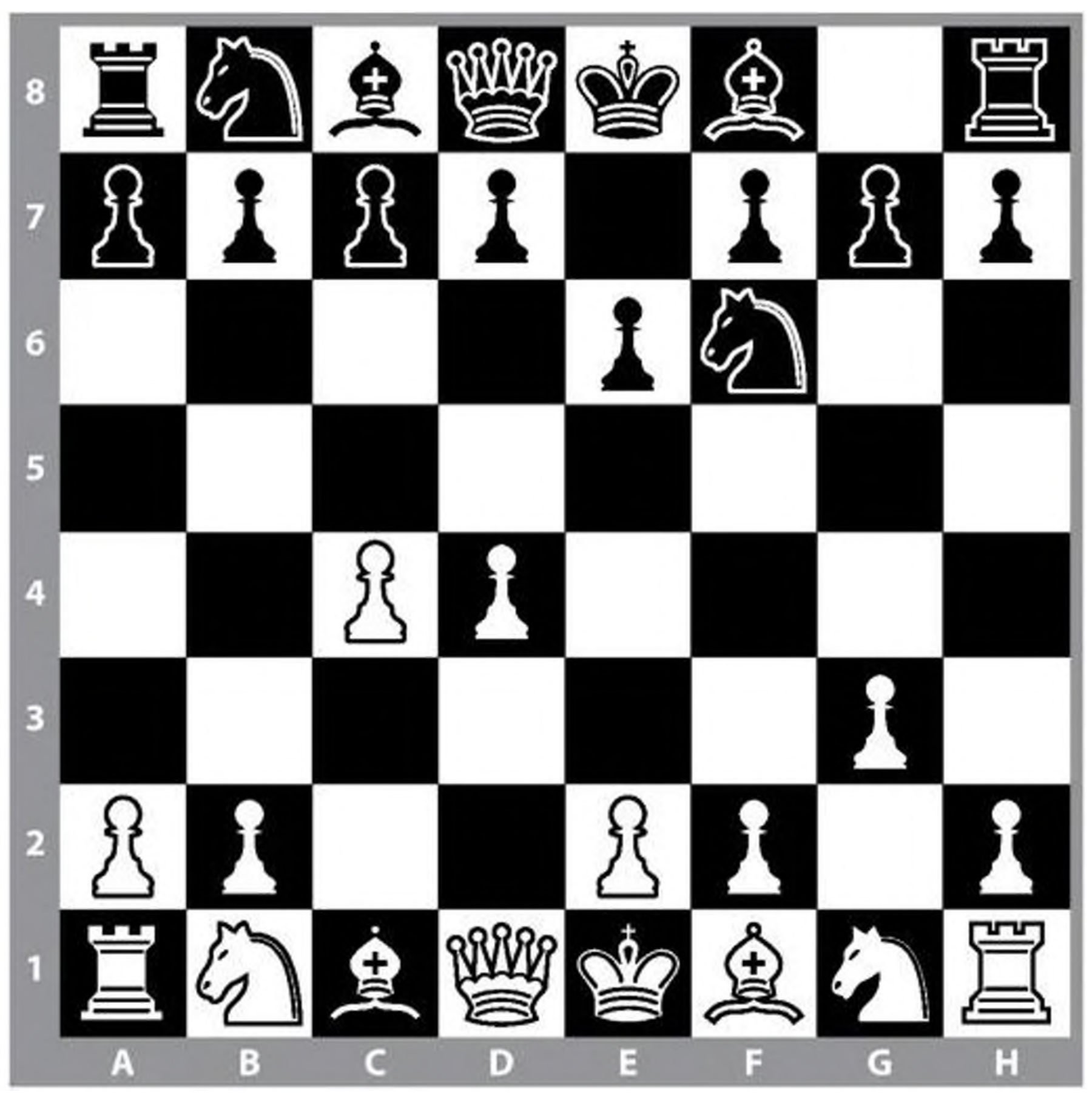




Catalan Opening

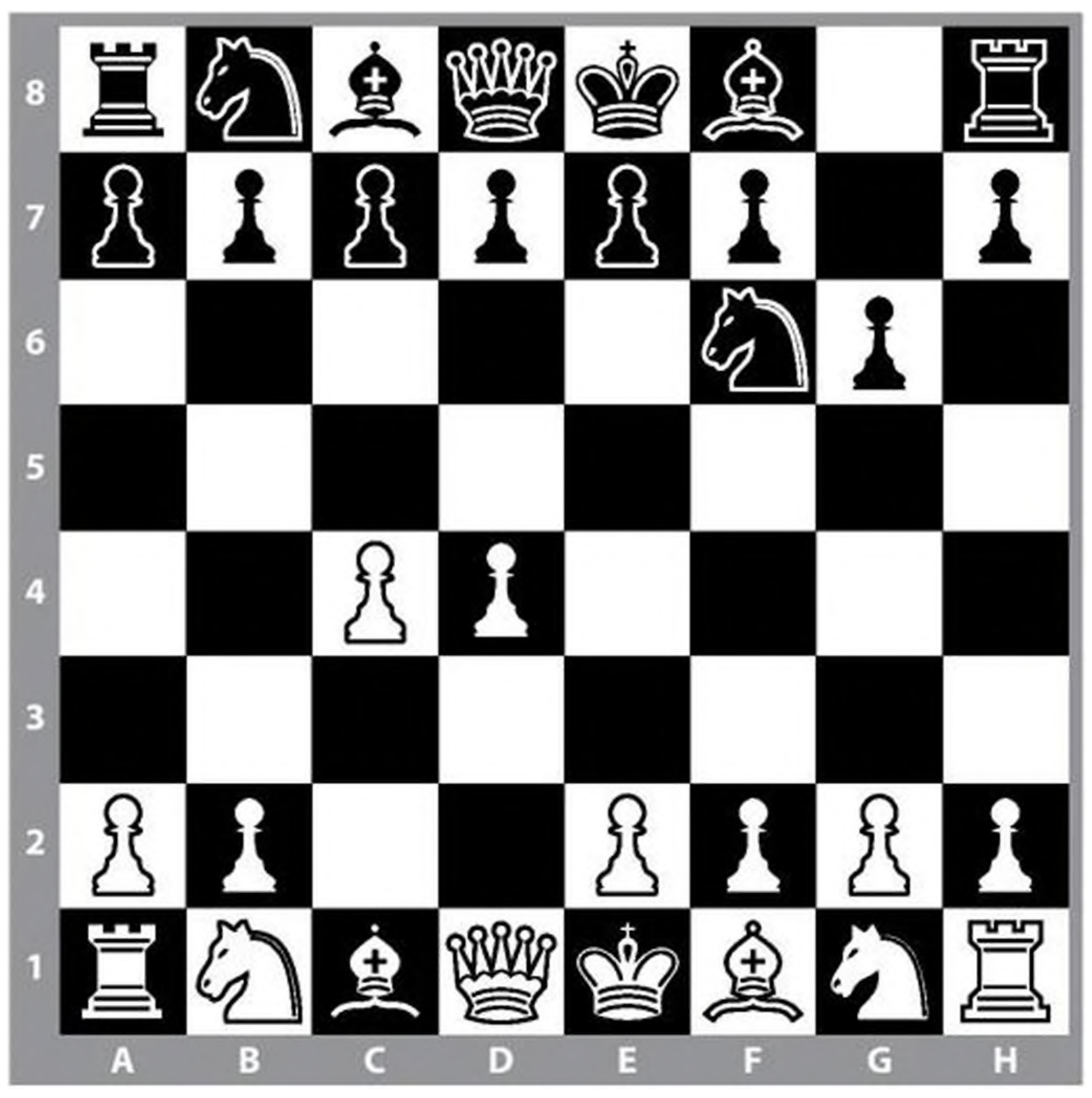
1. d4, Nf6 2. c4, e6 3. g3
The play order listed here is the most common instance of the Catalan, but there are several different moves that can all result in it. The opening is a variation of the Indian Defence (d4, Nf3). White moves its pawns to the centre to show a hold, but it also opens up a possible exit for a bishop to make a later play in the centre. This kind of prolonged attack is known as a 'hypermodern' approach, as players hold back on a strong centre attack. It is enjoying some popularity at the moment.

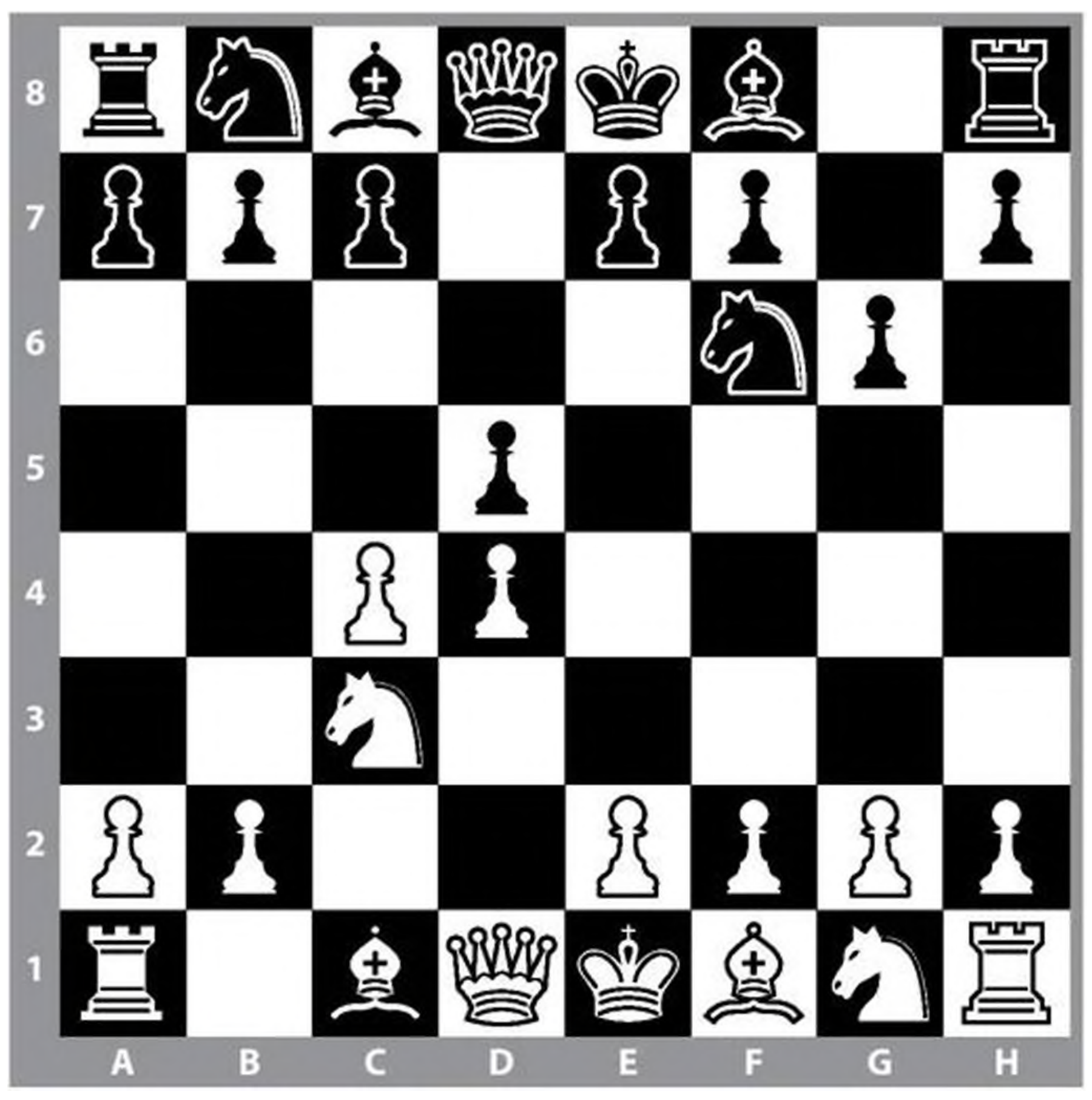




Grünfeld Defence

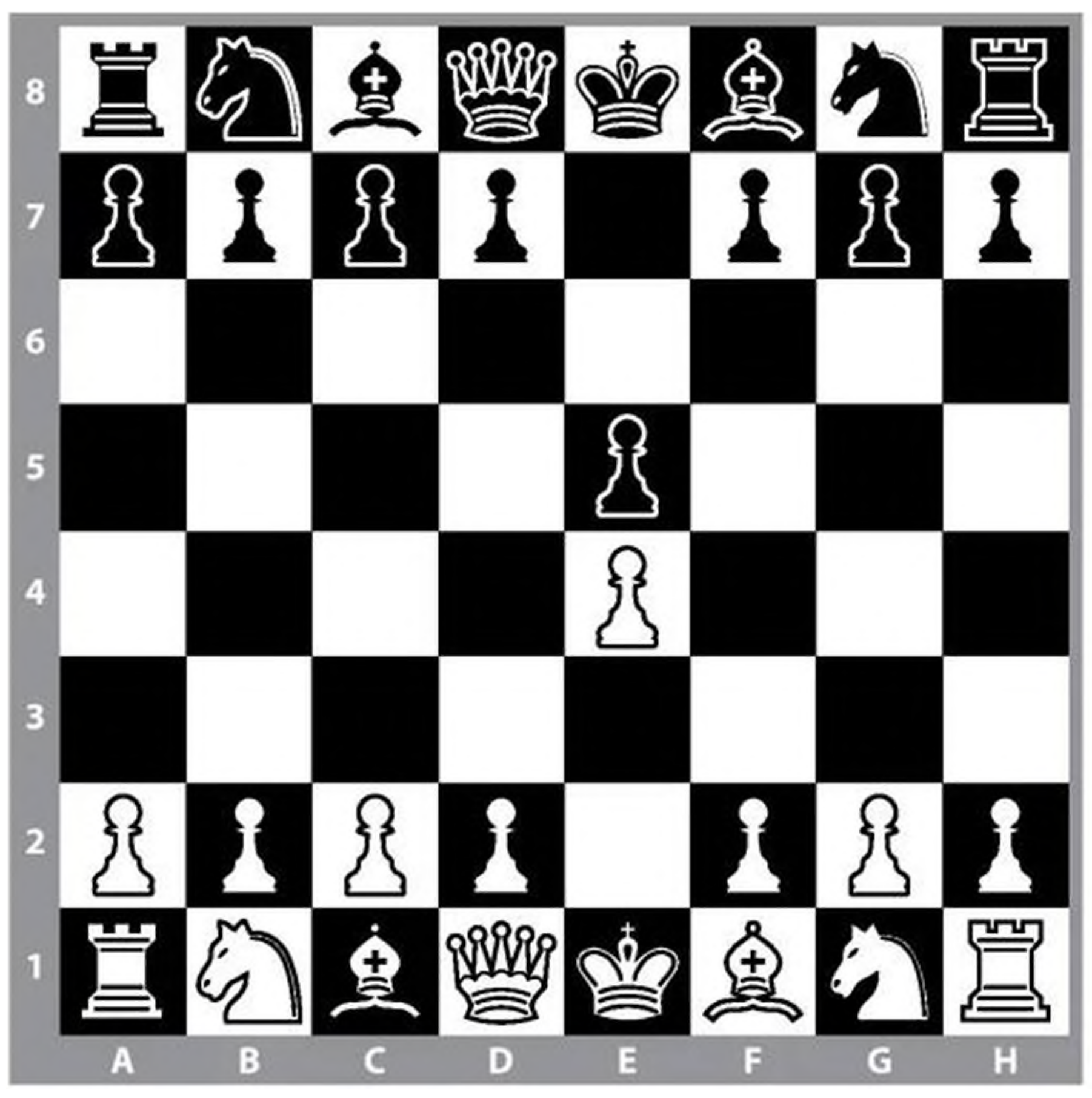
1. d4, Nf6 2. c4, g6 3. Nc3, d5
This moves on from the King's Indian Defence. The first two moves are the same, opening with the Indian Defence (d4, Nf6), then c4 and g6. The Grünfeld Defence kicks in with white knight to c3, then black pawn to d5. It was made popular after Ernst Grünfeld played it successfully against Alexander Alekhine at Vienna in 1922 and is still used in championship matches. It can develop in a number of ways, including the Exchange Variation (white takes d5, followed by black capturing d5).

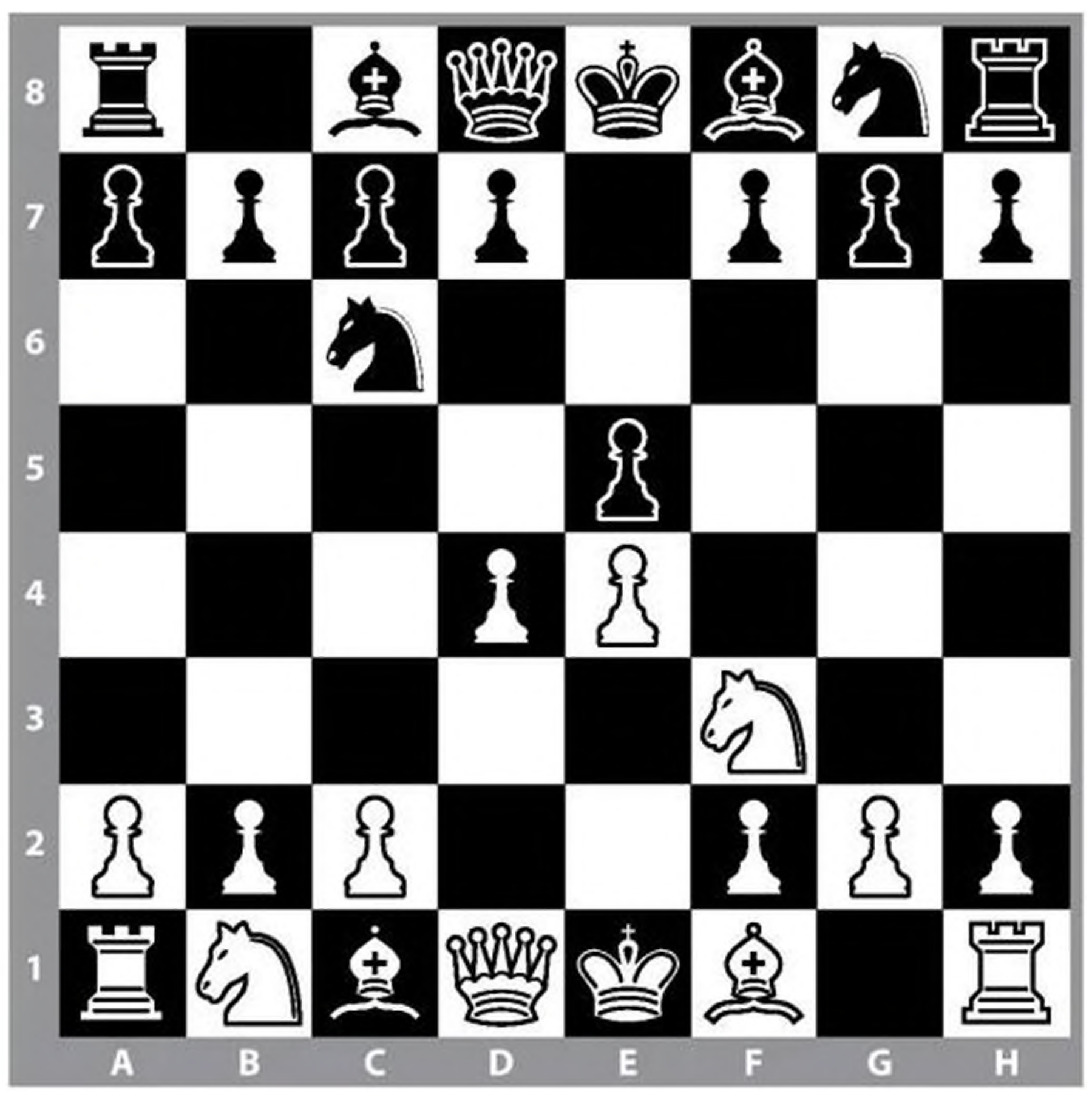




Scotch Game

1. e4, e5 2. Nf3, Nc6 3. d4
This is often used as an alternative to Ruy Lopez to try to catch out black. It follows the same first two moves, but instead of moving bishop to b5, and usually triggering the Morphy Defence, white moves pawn to d4. It is an aggressive opening that sees white take a strong central stance. It is used by some of the top chess players in the world and is currently undergoing a resurgence in popularity. It is a game worth studying by both black and white alike, as it gives opportunity to both players.





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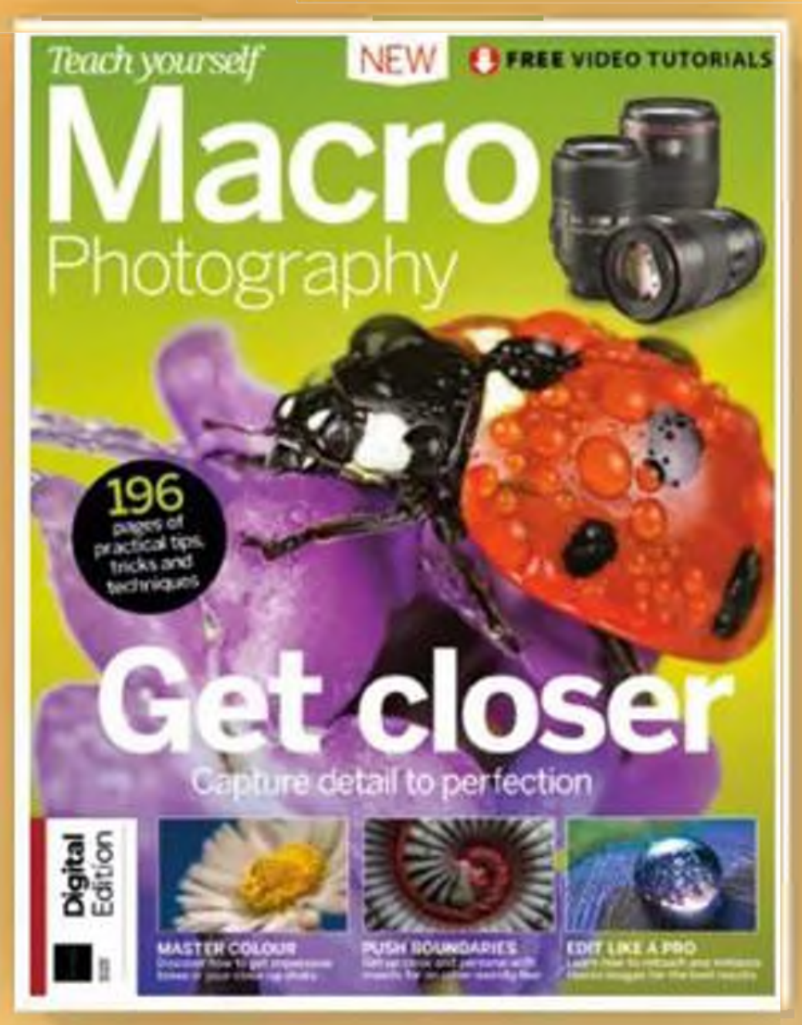
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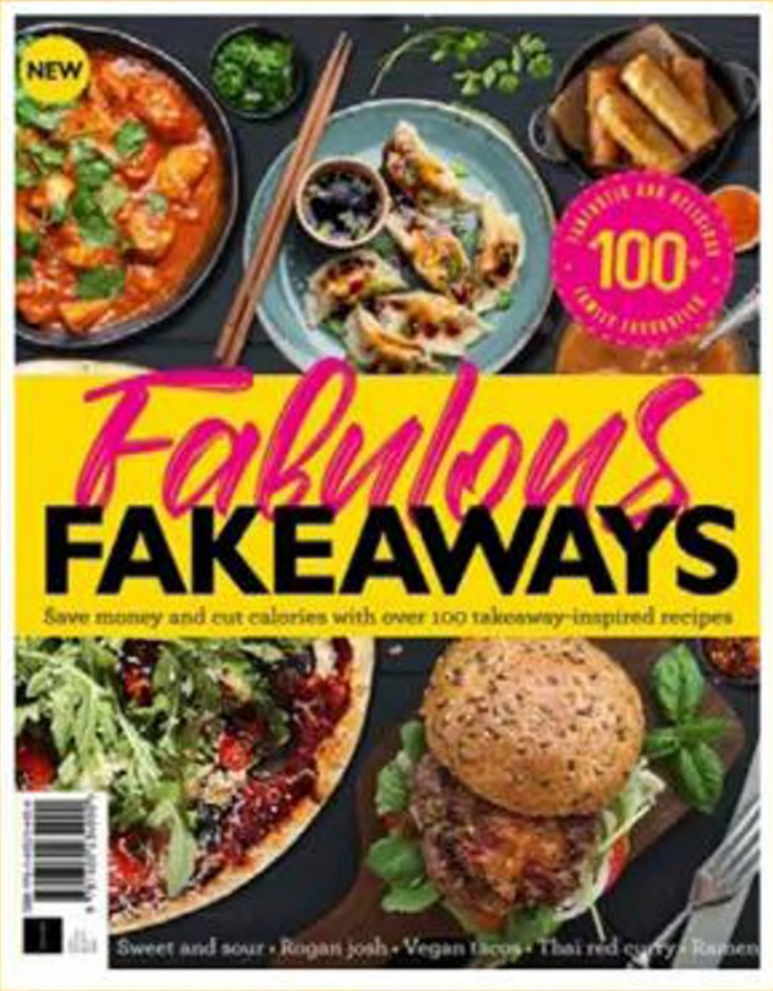

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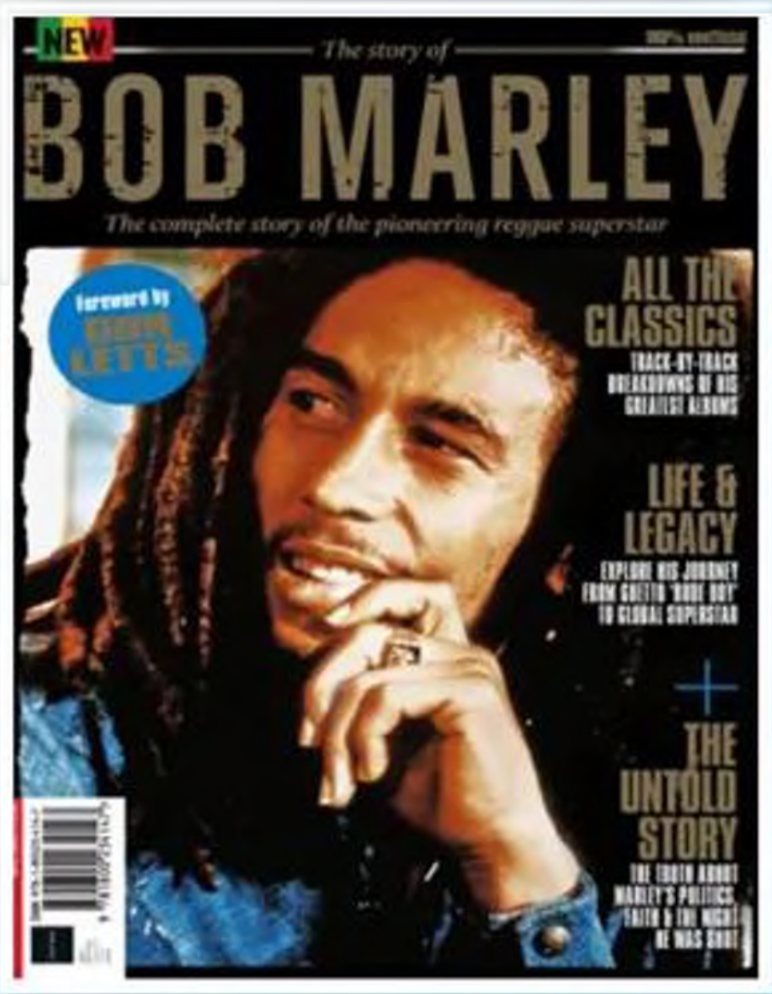

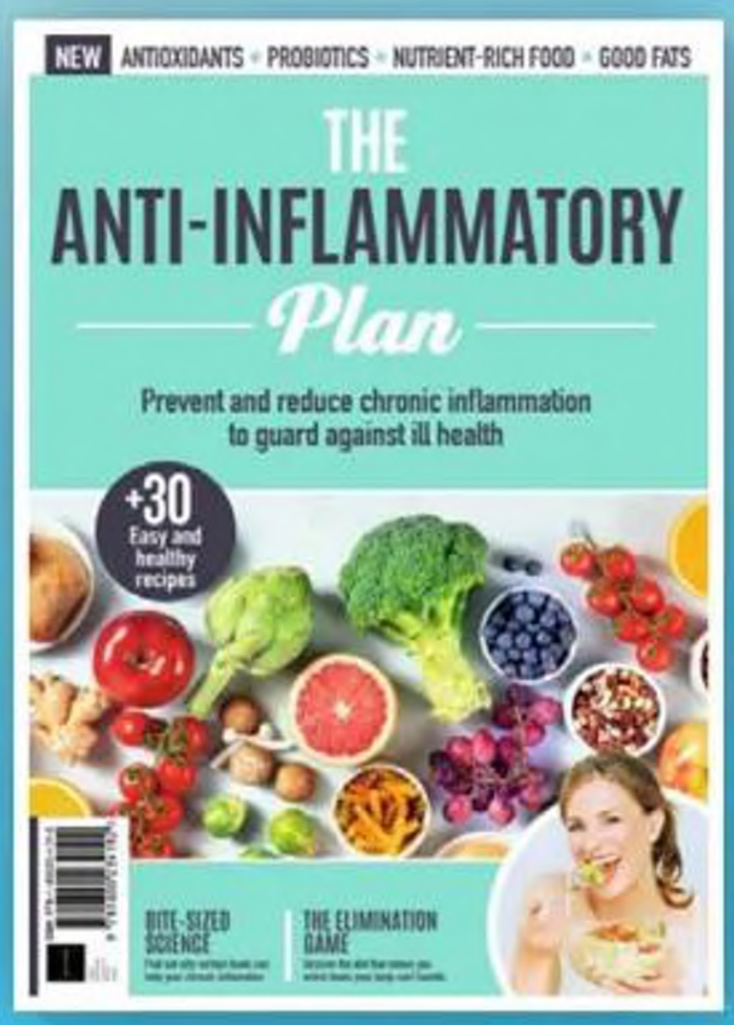

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